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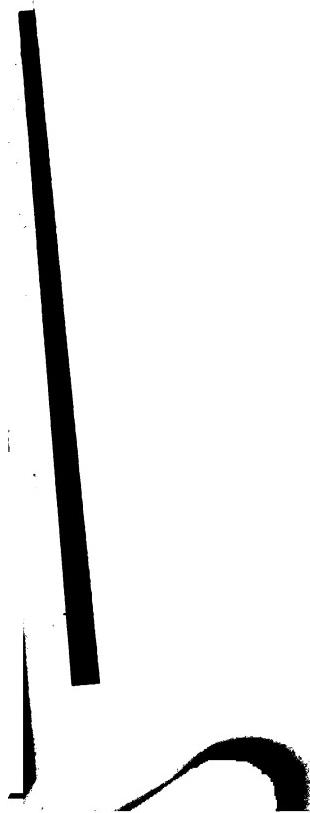


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LATEST NEWS  
FROM  
**THREE WORLDS,**  
**HEAVEN, EARTH AND HELL:**  
AS REPORTED AT A  
**FOUR-DAYS MEETING IN SHIRLEY, MASS.**  
IN LETTERS  
TO  
**EIGHT CALVINISTIC MINISTERS.**  
BY RUSSELL STREETER.

And now, O ye Priests, this commandment is for you. Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand. JEHOVAH.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:  
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR.  
PRESS OF THE UNIVERSALIST.

1833.

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1833

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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In publishing the Second Edition of these Letters, revised and enlarged by notes, the author tenders his gratitude to the Universalist Public and the reading community in general, for the very liberal patronage bestowed on such humble labors. Nothing but the thrilling importance of the subjects, could have awakened such a general and lively interest.

Although this little volume embraces a discussion of the main points in Christian Theology, as well as a faithful report of the strange and multifarious news, lately revealed in this town, yet, it was suspected that the singularity of the title might deter some from giving it a careful perusal. In this we are happily disappointed. The inquirer, who barely dips into its pages, at once perceives from the brief outline of subjects, at the head of each Letter, that there is not the *repetition* which some might expect. Wherein different preachers dwelt upon the same subject, it is once discussed and then referred to, as the case might require. This method has afforded room for a great variety of subjects in a small compass.

No complaint is heard from the preachers addressed, of misrepresentation. It is admitted that in most cases, the reports of arguments and anecdotes, are singularly *accurate*. If a reply is made, it will probably be the joint labor of the whole, but come forth in the name of Mr. Rogers.

Nothing but a consciousness of irretrievable de  
will induce them to remain silent. If the writer is  
beneath the notice of God, he cannot be of those pre  
ers, unless they are 'exalted above all that is called G  
Hence, there is no chance to back out with honor.

The *new ground* occupied by the author, in regar  
solemn meetings and God's *threatenings*, he is convin  
is tenable. The New Testament teaches no such c  
trines. The notes, critical and explanatory inserted  
this edition, we hope will not be uninteresting.

Those Editors who have generously published not  
of this humble effort to prevent *spasmodic revivals*,  
accept the author's most grateful acknowledgeme  
All those who insert this INTRODUCTION, and forward  
papers containing it, to *Shirley Village Post Office*,  
be entitled to a copy of this edition in return.

THE AUTHOR

February 15, 1833.

## LETTER I.

To Rev. J. R. Cushing,

CALVINIST MINISTER OF BOXBOROUGH, MASS

(Queries concerning God's Purpose in Creating; His Desires,  
Anger, &c.)

MY DEAR SIR:

As I have had the pleasure of a momentary acquaintance with you, since I wrote you on the 1st instant, you will excuse me from using any great formality in presenting you this communication. My feelings were altogether friendly when I repelled the unfounded charges you had published against me, and they are no less so, in addressing you on the present occasion. Permit me then, as I have no enmity to revenge, nor grudges to gratify, to call your attention to the substance of the sermon which you preached in this town, at the opening of the late *four-days meeting*. My limits forbid my doing more than merely to present an epitome of the discourse, though I could, if necessary, write it out in full, and nearly *verbatim*.

The text was appropriate, viz. John xi: 56.  
'*What think ye? that he will not come to the feast?*' Although it appeared singular to me that

you did not feel the inspiration of your subject enough to read it after the manner of asking questions, yet I assure you, Sir, that your apparent sincerity and meekness more than atoned for the deficiency. Having mentioned 'the feast and the guests' at which Jesus was expected, you applied the text by way of accommodation, to the occasion on which we had convened, thus :—

1st. You considered Christ as the author of the feast. He had prepared the gospel feast at immense cost and sacrifice. Though he was rich yet he became poor, &c. That he laid aside the immortal glories of heaven, came down to earth and suffered and died, to prepare a rich and glorious feast, for poor, perishing sinners, &c.

2dly. It was always expected that he who prepared a feast for his friends, at vast expense and labor, would be present and preside at it, to welcome those whom he had invited, &c. And so it was with Christ. He would certainly come and meet his friends who had assembled on the first day of the feast, and remain with them through the 2d, 3d, and 4th days, and to the close. You designated the *friends* of Christ by referring to his words, 'Ye are the light of the world,—ye are the salt of the earth,' &c. not you ought to be; but ye are. They were such as really loved God with all the heart, and their neighbors, and even *enemies* as themselves.

3dly. Jesus would be present to recognize *enemies* as well as his *friends*; to see if any there, who had not the wedding garment on;

if so, to disown them and cast them off, that they might depart at the judgment day, into utter darkness. That while Christ would greet his friends and *all penitent sinners* with approving smiles, he would pour out his anger upon ungodly foes.

Your inferences were, that God is infinitely benevolent—extremely desirous that sinners should repent immediately, and escape his own wrath ! that he has made ample provision for the salvation of the whole world, and, if any finally perish and endure his anger forever, it will be their own fault, as God is not only willing, but *extremely anxious* to have them all repent and be saved. And lastly, that it is awfully dangerous to neglect the calls of the gospel to immediate repentance ; for God is angry with the wicked every day, and may cut them off at any moment, from all means of salvation, and doom them to endure the fire of his wrath in hell forever, &c.

Now, Sir, let me propose a few plain and easy questions, in reference to the above.

1st. How did you learn that Jesus Christ appointed or authorized that *protracted* meeting? That part of your discourse was *news* to me. Please show your authority for making such a report.

2nd. Are you, Mr. Cushing, a rank Arminian? Do you deny God's having a definite purpose in bringing every human being into existence? Did He create beings without *knowing* what the *final destiny of each* would be? Certainly not. Well, can the destiny of one soul in the universe, be

## LETTER TO

8

different from what God *knew* it would be, from everlasting? Now, Sir, turn which way you will, the result will be equally disastrous to your sermon. To say that God had *no purpose* in the creation of beings destined to exist eternally, is to charge Him foolishly; but to say God *purposed* what he *knew* would *not* come to pass, is, if possible, still worse. For we cannot conceive of any thing more absurd and foolish, than for any being to lay a plan and attempt to execute it, when he *knows* it will be *defeated*. And yet, you represented the Deity as acting with *less decision*, than *Arminians* generally do. If you have abandoned Calvinism, haul down your colours like an honest man, and abandon the name.

3d. Do you really believe that any human being will be eternally miserable? I do not ask concerning your *fears* that some are *exposed* to such a fate. But do you *believe* that doctrine? Suppose you say,—‘Yes! I believe Judas is finally lost Well, now let us hold converse as at the bar God. Would you, Sir, act so inconsistently, unwisely, as to use any means whatever to reclaim one, who, you conscientiously believed, would certainly be damned? Most surely not. pretensions of that kind would be shallow & false, being opposed to your simple *belief*. what light then do you exhibit your Creed when he is making a rich feast at infinite expense, for souls which He *knew* would reject or be rejected by him; and, as using ‘means except the right, to save those, who

*knew*, infinite ages before he made them, would be miserable forever? Are such means and efforts sincere? If sincere at all, are they not more sincerely hypocritical, than your attempts would be to save *Judas*, if you *believed* him to be irretrievably lost? Certainly; and no man of good sense can deny it.

4th. Are *you* a worthy guest of the gospel feast,—the light and salt of the earth? If you can abide by your own criterion, you will do well; better, perhaps, than any other man on earth. If you love God with all your heart, and your fellow-beings as yourself, you are as perfect now, as you ever can be in heaven. And besides that,—if you love your neighbors and enemies as yourself, you can no more be reconciled to their endless misery, than your own. You will forever thrill with pain, while they are pierced through with sorrows,—and sigh for anguish, while listening to the wild shrieks of their deathless agonies! These are plain facts. But which way you can turn, I know not. For, if you confess that you do not obey the whole law, then you are condemned out of your own mouth, as one having not on the wedding garment, and must hear the damning voice, ‘depart!’ but if you answer in the affirmative, and assert your perfect obedience, then your love for suffering neighbors would compell you to sympathize so deeply in their sorrows, that your *heaven* would differ only in *name*, from their *hell*!

5th. Do you really think that *God* is as an-

ious to save *all men*, as the ministers who attended the four days meeting were, to have the hearers saved? Because, if He is, he will take as much pains, in proportion to His power and means, as you did. And did you not do all you could to effect your object? Did you leave one sinner unconverted, whom you could have converted, if you had pleased? Certainly not. But dear Sir, suppose it should be known to the good people of Shirley, that notwithstanding all your professions of concern for poor souls, and all your preaching and praying and exhorting, and all that help you called in by making church-members pray by the hour, two or three times each day, yet, after all, you had *power* and *means* enough at your command, to have saved every sinner in town, if you had been so disposed? What would the people think of you? Why, they must conclude you were deceivers, so long as you did *act* according to your professions. How the matter stand then, when applied to the God you worship? He is possessed of Almighty power, and the whole universe is a storehouse of matter subject to his command. God speaks, and vast worlds start into being; he reverses his words, and they are dissolved. He commands, and angels obey him with wings of light to execute his pleasure. He created the sun, from the blazing comet to the glowing meteor, and from the huge mass of matter, the mote balancing in the air, is subject to the control of Deity. Will you contend that *God will not, if so disposed, convert any man*?

e world of sinners? And if he is not so dis-  
ed, and does not intend to exert his almighty  
ver to produce their conversion, and yet pro-  
es to be sincerely desirous to effect that ob-  
, does He not, so to speak, mock their cre-  
ity or impose on their stupidity? You can-  
deny it. Why, my dear Sir, you would fain  
e us believe that God Almighty, who holds  
lds as pebbles in his hand, was so desirous to  
a the people in this town, that he made us a  
cial visit; and yet was so indifferent as to the  
lt, that he neglected the means even, of call-  
them to the place of his exhibition, and was  
eived by the scanty number of forty or fifty  
sons, most of whom were saints, or spectators  
n other towns! For *me* to trifle with the name  
my Maker in that manner would be blasphem-

. Even the few clergymen who were present,  
nifested no small degree of mortification, that  
clarion which had announced *their coming*,  
l excited no greater attention. Can any mor-  
believe, for a moment, that He who does all  
pleasure, in all worlds and among all crea-  
es, was desirous of converting the people of  
irley to Calvinism, at the above named meet-  
? Why did He not employ means, at least,  
get the people together? Why suffer the  
ole Unitarian Society to remain at home, and  
st of the Universalists, the Shakers, and oth-  
? Why, Sir, the pretension is too ridiculous  
be made the subject of interrogations! Did I  
t soberly believe there is a rock of truth at the

bottom of christianity, as firm as the eternal throne of its Author, I should be shamed out of the system, by such barefaced impositions, and blushless abuses and perversions of religion.

It was my intention, Sir, when I commenced writing, to offer a few queries concerning what you said about the *anger* and *wrath* of that Being whom you represented as infinitely benevolent to all, and sincerely desirous of effecting their salvation. But I am afraid you will be hasty, and suspect I mean to discredit some parts of the Bible. If such should be the case, my labors would not prove useful. However, presuming on your candor, let me inquire ;—What sort of an opinion do you imagine your Church would form of *me*, provided you should notify them next Sabbath, that I was daily expected in town, and being a giant for bodily strength was about to reward my friends and punish my enemies ? And add, Mr. S. is very desirous that you would all conduct like friends, so as to escape his wrath ; and you had better comply ; for he is angry even with his own children every day. Not because they injure him or can do it ; but the children get angry and abuse one another, and on that account the father keeps his wrath bottled up, from day to day ; and when he does pour it out, it is as hot as the fire of hell ! What opinion would your friends form of such a character ? Good ? or bad ? And what idea must young and inexperienced minds have of God himself, if ministers repeat certain passages of scripture, in which *anger*, *wrath* and *vengeance*, are used, and weave

them into the web of endless hell torments ? Why, Sir, they fear and dread his coming as they would an almighty monster, and crouch and kneel in tears, as children pay obeisance to the lion and the tiger. I should consider myself defamed, if represented as being so much like a child as to get angry daily at children's foibles and wrath, and so much like a fool, as to retain it in my bosom, even for one night. It is beneath a noble soul to let 'the sun go down upon its wrath.' 'Anger resteth in the bosom of fools ;' and it is the only resting place it can have. The bosom of a wise man, if disturbed by anger, is like a chrystral pool tossed and torn by a tempest, whose rest is restored when the gale subsides and dies away, and the greeting sunbeams meet a placid welcome on its tranquil face. There was not a minister among you, who would not consider it defamatory and libellous to be represented as angry continually. I should rather risk the charge of downright hypocrisy and imposture, than publish such a libel on their characters. And still, they accused God of wreaking his infinite anger and fury on his own offspring to all eternity. That after a limited time, He would refuse to be pacified, and not only torment the creatures of his power, but *laugh* and *mock* them to scorn. He is a wonderful being truly ; both loving and angry, and laughing and mocking, at the same time ! And is this the BEING in whom we live and move and have our whole existence ! Awful thought, truly ! But I need not dwell on this subject. Your friend

*Rogers* offered an interpretation of your meaning or rather what *it should* have been, in remarks at the close of your sermon. He said the *anger of God* implied such anger only, as a perfectly holy and *benevolent* God in heaven can feel. That he meant to use the Bible words in a *bible sense*. Very well, said I, only live up to that rule, and no liberal man will complain. But Mr. Roger himself violated his own rule, in his sermon, and ascribed anger to God, which would disgrace the volcanic bosom of any tyrant on earth. God can no more be *angry*, in any human acceptation of the word, than he can *change* his feelings, alter his mind and purpose, and *act* like ignorant, frail and erring men. He is of one mind and none can turn him. If we take the words *anger*, *wrath*, *indignation* and *vengeance*, in the common meaning, implying ‘*pain and dissatisfaction on receiving an injury, and an inflamed disposition to seek revenge*;’ we should tremble at the thought of ascribing them to Jehovah. The same would be true of all those passages which speak of God’s *repenting*, being ‘*grieved at heart*,’ being ‘*weary*,’ ‘*jealous*,’ &c. If we allow the *words* to be true *signs* of the feelings and disposition of Deity, it will prove Him unworthy of all confidence, love and veneration, by possessing in an infinite degree, those feelings and passions which are most detestable or unpleasant among men.\* A *repenting*, *grieved*, *weary*, *jealous*,

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\* *Anger* comes from the Latin *angor*, vexation; from *angorex*, compounded of *an* or *ad*—against, and *ago* to act. But can Jehovah suffer any vexation, and act against his offspring *such excitement*? Impossible.

ous, angry object of worship, is too barbarous a doctrine to pass current in these days. How could you ask your people, Sir, to be perfect as such a being is perfect? Would you wish them to imitate him in being ‘angry every day,’ and all the time, and jealous too, forever? Surely not. Then you will agree with me, that however great may be the latitude in the use of terms, in scripture phraseology, every thing of that kind should be interpreted in conformity to the greater truth, ‘*God is without variableness or the shadow of turning.*’

But what surprised me most of all, was, that you did not represent God as possessing any real energy or decision of purpose, till He got *so angry* as not to be pacified on any conditions whatever, He was confined to *wishes* and *desires* and *willingness* during the wrath of *every day*

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*Wrath*, in Latin *ira* anger; Greek *eris* contention, strife, quarrel; all which are derived from the Hebrew *herah*, or *cherah* heat or anger; meaning hot anger.

‘Moralists have defined anger and wrath to be, a desire of *revenge* for some injury offered.’—STEELE

‘Achilles’ wrath to Greece, the direful spring  
Of woes unnumbered, heavenly Goddess sing.’—POPE.

I hope now to be understood by all. I mean that the Father of lights is not and cannot be *angry* or *wrathful*, in the proper sense of words. If Calvinists reply, by saying, ‘Anger does not mean the same when speaking of God, as when it is applied to men, and other angry beings;’ my answer is, that they have given up the point in dispute. If they do not believe in the real anger of the Almighty, why do they continue to profess that cruel sentiment? Do they not ascribe a sort of *anger* to Him, infinitely more cruel in its results, than any which has been exhibited by men? Good old Jacob said of certain ones, ‘Cursed be their wrath for it was fierce, and their anger for it was cruel. But were they so fiercely cruel, as even to wish for the endless torture of those who were incapable of injuring them in the least?’

but *one*, viz. ‘the judgment,’ when having got beyond pacification, He drives *free agents* to hell, with as much ease as Samson slew the Philistines ! Nor did I understand that the Almighty would need so much help then, as now. No *four-days meetings* necessary to judge and doom sinners to an endless hell, and no difficulty in making them go ! All is decision of purpose at the judgment ; but all before that was good wishes, entreaties, desires, &c. with extreme caution not to infringe on man’s free-agency ! Quite a *change* in the great Unchangeable, according to your theory and preaching ! He executes his pleasure in damning people with great dispatch.

Now, Mr. Cushing, if you think my views are erroneous and dangerous, it is your duty to correct them. You will not be allowed to excuse yourself for neglect, by the plea that you suspected my *motives* were not good. My motives have nothing to do with your duty. And besides, the Book of remembrance will contain the *fact* of my purity of motives, which, coming in a blaze, from the recording angel, would be startling and overwhelming ! Although I cannot say but that an intimate acquaintance would be very desirable, yet I am not so *selfish* as to wish you to neglect your own duty, for the base purpose of having an agreeable companion in the world of wo. Make your own calling and election sure first ; remembering that,

‘ Whils’t the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return,’

And while we are in a tuneful mood, I will sing too :—

' If I am right, thy grace impart,  
Still in the right to stay ;  
If I am wrong, O teach my heart,  
To find the better way.'

With sentiments of friendship and respect,

R. STREETER.

*Shirley Village, 8th October, 1832.*

## LETTER II.

*To Rev. Mr. Rogers,*

CALVINIST MINISTER OF TOWNSEND, MASS.

(Total Depravity—Selfishness—Self-love—Sinners not selfish—Heaven—Hell, &c.—Calvinists encourage selfishness.)

RESPECTED SIR :

The great question, which like the rod of the Jewish high priest, swallows up all others, is, 'What is Truth?' *Divine truth?* Yes, Sir, according to your system, each of us has an interest at stake in the solution of this problem, in comparison with which, the wealth or poverty, the pleasures or pains of this short life, are as the fitful sensations of a moment and the fleeting visions of a dreamy hour. If the dread decisions of 'tall, and wise, and *reverend heads*' are to be regarded, *I have a soul to save or finally lose,* of

more value than as many little worlds like this, as could be crowded into infinite space. Is it to be admitted then, for a moment, that with such a fact staring me full in the face, and the thundering threats of *eight* Clergymen still ringing in my ears, I can do otherwise than discharge a conscientious duty in offering these queries and remarks?

So far as regards the address you made at the close of Mr. Cushing's discourse, on the 2nd instant, I need only say, that I was interested in the easy, ingenious manner, in which the various subjects were handled. As you perceived, perhaps, I could but smile to see with what delicacy you qualified and softened some expressions which had just been uttered. The saying, for instance, so oft repeated, that 'God and Christ might be expected at the meeting, that they would come down and be with the assembly,' &c. you interpreted to mean, that 'the presence of God or the Divine influence would be sensibly felt and realized in the soul.' The *anger* of God was also represented, as meaning nothing more than an exhibition of holiness and benevolence, in the administration of an infinite God in heaven; as the bible teaches. I was satisfied at once, that in expansion of views and your mode of thinking and reasoning, you were 'head and shoulders' above the clergy in general of your denomination. And you were no less happy and timely, Sir, in the plain common-sense manner, in which you *took off the formalists*, who make such an ado

about praying, vocally, ‘every night and morning,’ and yet, as you justly remarked, ‘had a set of old dull prayers which had been learned from some old prayer-book, or otherwise committed to memory, for particular times and occasions ; and that it was impossible for families—young people in particular—to take any other interest in hearing such prayers *said over*, than to keep along *ahead* of the one praying, till, from recollection, they could rejoice that the ceremony would soon be ended.’ I was glad to hear such remarks from *you*, for they were well received ; whereas, if *I* had made them in my desk, and *looked just as serious as you did*, ‘some bird of the air would have carried the news’ to my *limitarian* neighbours, and the hue and cry been raised that I ridiculed family-prayer, and black-guarded people, because they were not, like myself, full of *head religion*, and capable of praying often, and yet never pray twice alike.

I did not get in soon enough to hear your text, but concluded it was John iii. 3. ‘*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*’

You were saying, when I entered church, that you ‘had clearly proved by scripture, the *natural, total depravity of the heart*. Not that man was naturally as wicked as he could be, but totally opposed to every thing good.’ Here a query arose,—how can a being be *worse* than to oppose all that is morally good? But to say nothing about such absurdities, will you have the good-

ness, Sir, to inform me, in what book, chapter and verse, of the Bible, the words *total depravity* are to be found? I was a professor of religion and a diligent searcher of the Scriptures, probably, before you were born; and I hesitate not to say, that neither *deprave*, *depravity*, nor *total depravity* are named in the record of truth. They are terms of human invention.

But, as though dissatisfied with your own proofs, from Scripture, you went on to substantiate the doctrine, 'by an affecting story of a man who was seized with the *Cholera*, and, on being brought to the door of an affluent *Brother*, was refused admittance and sent to his barn, to die like the beasts!' And you added with emphasis, 'the *Cholera* did not *deprave* the heart of that brother; it only brought the *depravity out!* *brought it out!*'

Now suppose your story true. Have you any evidence that the man who refused to take his sick brother into his house, had any ill-will towards him? Certainly not. He was *afraid* the complaint was contagious or infectious; and his *fear* was probably produced by such men as now seize on such improbable, unnatural occurrences, to prove a favorite theory. They first make people shudder at the thought of dying, and whil they are pale with *fear*, point them in the face and tell them it is palpable proof of the depravit of their hearts! Miserable comforters indeed!

But, Sir, suppose we admit that the man *wc totally depraved*. Was it *natural* depravity? *it natural* for a brother to conduct in that man

other things being equal? Such cases, at most, are few and far between. You meant to imply that if the sick and suffering brother had been cordially received and nourished, it would have evinced *purity* instead of *pravity*. Hence your reasoning proves too much; because there are 999 cases in which a natural brother would be kind, even to the exposure of his own life, to *one*, in which he would exhibit such depravity as you mentioned. I am suspicious, friend Rogers, that you have read Virgil with more attention than Paul, and been culling flowers of rhetoric instead of the fruits of divine truth, or you would have discovered the difference between *nature* and its *abuses*. St. Paul speaks expressly of those, who 'changed the *natural* use of' their faculties and affections, into their opposites, and of course, became *unnatural*, and of those who 'were *without natural affection,—unmerciful*.' The case you mentioned was precisely of that character; the brother 'was unmerciful—without natural affection.' He changed the natural use of fraternal affection into that which was against nature, and sent his own brother to perish with the beasts. And this is not the only change which we see in nature, for some men become so infatuated with a creed, that they are strangely unnatural, and 'change the truth of God into a lie,' in order to prove that the human heart is naturally depraved! They are 'heady, high-minded, false accusers,—despisers of those that are good, naturally; and 'having a form of godliness without the power,

they *creep* into houses and lead captive' the inexperienced and unguarded members of families. See Rom. i. 25, 31, and 2 Tim. iii. 3, 4, &c. Although I do not blame you, Sir, for the existence of a creed which transforms God's truth into unmerciful *dogmas*, still I may be allowed to express a strong desire, that you may not long continue in its support and defence.

You *defined* 'total, innate depravity to mean, entire selfishness, or a supreme regard to self,—to one's own good to the exclusion of regard for the good of others.' This you wished your hearers to bear constantly in mind, as you proceeded in the discourse. For one, *I* was careful in heeding the suggestion.

Well, Sir, let me ask you, whether any thing like the above, is discovered in people in a state of nature? Do young children naturally evince such selfishness in the early intercourse of life, while sporting and playing through the prattling and noisy races of laughing infancy? Did the Lord Jesus teach the doctrine of native depravity, by infolding natural children in his arms, saying, 'Of *such* is the kingdom of God?' 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God.' Did he mean, that except the regenerate were converted back to total selfishness, they could not be saved? So it would seem according to your views!

Do husbands and wives, in the peaceful and joyous intercourse of life, act upon the principle of depraved selfishness, regardless of mutual bliss,

in providing for each other and their helpless children? Does an exclusive selfishness inspire the bosom of a tender mother with unceasing care and regard for the safety and health of her prattling little ones? Does a wicked selfishness brace open her eyes in perpetual wakefulness and tune her lips to the midnight *lullaby*, at the cradle of infantile restlessness and suffering? Oh! do not, I entreat you, kind Sir, dash to atoms, with the sledge of dogmatism, that delicate and beautiful structure, which the finger of God has erected in the natural affections of the heart! And, if sport you must in the devastations and degradation of the glories of nature, yet spare I beg you, the purest and holiest jewel in the temple of creation, —*the sacred love of a mother for the darling of her bosom!*

For some unaccountable reason, your searching eyes seemed to be bent on hunting up circumstances of human infirmity and weakness, and by a flaming process, converting them into proofs of total depravity. And I am sorry to tell you, that many things came from your fingers like glass which has been smoked, till its natural appearance is smuttily defaced. For example. You adduced the fact, that, in the transfer of property, men are careful to have writings made out in legal and indisputable forms, and the bounds distinctly known and stated, as evidence of natural dishonesty and selfishness! Surprising! What would you say then, if they uniformly endeavored to leave every thing at loose ends, so as to give

*one rogue* to a thousand honest men, a loop to hang his hope of mischief on? The holy wish that no disputes may arise from treachery of memory, but each man hold and transmit to his heirs and assigns, what is his *own* and *no more*, is, to your analyzing mind, convincing evidence of supreme selfishness!! But such reasoning is more tolerable in ‘a man of the gown,’ than it would be in the most illiterate and untalented ‘limb of the law,’ that is permitted to waive a ‘green bag’ in a Court-room.

Perhaps you may suggest that, although thus far you failed in your argument, you have one refuge left, since the abandoned sinner is certainly depraved according to your definition. Suppose I admit it? What then? Does it prove he was *naturally* so? Surely not. If it was the *nature* of man to be *sinful*, he would be *happy* in his iniquities. His misery would increase, just in proportion to his wanderings from his native element. And so it seems you thought, when you said the sinner would be more miserable in *heaven* than in *hell*!

But, dear Sir, I want to rouse your attention by saying a few words rather amusingly, concerning your manufacturing of *terms* and *definitions*, and then applying them to suit yourself. Give me the same liberty, and I engage to prove with all the certainty of demonstration, that Franklin was an Ourang Outang, and that *you* are one of the same species! Every thing depends, as logicians well know, on ‘begging the question,’ or

taking for granted, what ought to be proved. To be sure, such management is not new. I have seen it in the voluminous works of Calvin, Hopkins, the Edwards', Strong, Emmons, and a host of others. I took my first lessons of metaphysical reasoning from 'Edwards on the Will,' &c. There is not a link in that long chain but what I have measured time and again; nor should I have thrown it aside, had I not found the *swivel* where he took the point for granted, which was the subject in dispute. You have done the same, by making your own terms and affixing your own definitions. And what can not a man of talents accomplish, at that rate? Grant divines that liberty, and more tunes can be fingered off from the Bible, than any other instrument on earth. Hence, my object is, to bring you back to first principles, that we may begin right. Let us have no boyish skirmishes in the moonlight of sophistry.

The love of self or self-love is natural, pure and divine. Like other affections it may be abused or misdirected. It is alike consonant with scripture and common sense. The *love of self*, is made the grand criterion or rule by which the disciples of Christ are to graduate their love to their fellow beings. It constitutes the golden beam of equity. Break it, and the scale of 'equal rights' is destroyed. Social intercourse could no longer be governed by equal weights and measures. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' 'Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for

this is the law and the prophets.' 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbor.' See that none render evil for evil unto any man ; but ever follow that which is good, both among (or for) yourselves, and to all men.' Here is *self-love* expanded into social and divine. No being in the universe ever loved *himself too well*; but millions have *not loved others enough!* There is a wide difference between *loving ourselves* and *hating others*. A man's regard for himself, need not, in the least, diminish his regard for his fellow creatures, but rather increase it. He may know he is honest and upright, and as such, entirely approve of his own conduct; but does it follow that he must despise similar honesty in others? If he did, it would prove him *dishonest*, by 'not rendering to all their dues.'

But above all things, Sir, you were most inconsistent, when you charged entire *selfishness* upon sinners! According to your own showing, they disregard their *own good* both for time and eternity. Almost every sermon at the late meeting, gave the lie direct to the notion of the sinner's selfishness. If what you said be true, of all beings in creation, except the devil, the wilful sinner is the *least selfish*. It was made clear as the sun at noon-day, that 'the sinner was extremely miserable in this world,' and no one's experience could dispute it. And, to cut off all chances for mistake, it was made equally clear, that *if* the sinner should get to heaven, it would be to *him* the *hottest hell* in the universe! So that go

which way he would in his sins, up or down, the result was much the same ; all was *hell*, **HELL** ! He was also told, times without number, that if he ‘ went to hell, it was his own voluntary choice. He might escape it if he pleased. Every thing depended on his own *choice*.’ And, with these facts in view, can you make it appear that a sinner in that congregation would manifest a *supreme regard to his own good*, by voluntarily choosing to go to eternal damnation ? Does *he* consult his *own exclusive interest* in being damned forever ! Horrible conclusion ! The most you can make of it is, that the sinner would be so *selfish* as to prefer going to the coolest place of torment ; or, to use your own favorite terms, he would manifest extreme *selfishness* in choosing the hell of Hell, instead of the hell of Heaven , and even that upon the strength of the *late news*, that the former would be the most comfortable place !

Moreover, you preachers exerted yourselves to the utmost, to inspire sinners with the very *selfishness*, against which you were declaiming. ‘ You invited them to *secure* an eternal *interest* in Christ ; to consider the *worth* of the soul ; the danger of *losing* an immortal inheritance ; the chance for *gaining* a glorious heaven ; and entreated them to *consult* their *own immortal interest*, even at the exclusion of others ; and arise and leave them, however near and dear, and make their *own calling and election sure*,’ Now if that was not calculated to make them *selfish* and consult their *own good*, whether others were saved

or not, pray tell me what could exert such an influence. And even the crowner of 'the whole,' was sung in strains which might well cause hell to sicken, if it did not tremble; representing, that after 'husbands and wives,' 'parents and children,' 'brothers and sisters,' 'pastors and people,' had 'parted at the judgment seat of Christ,' to meet no more forever,—'O, there would be *shouting*; —*shouting*, *shouting*, *shouting*, among angels and saints' in heaven!! Those who ascended, would shout over the fall of ruined relatives and damned millions!! And yet you represent a supreme regard for our own good, as depraved *selfishness*! You crossed your own and each other's tracks, like men fighting fire, half blinded and crazed in the midst of smoke and dust and confusion.

After speaking 'of man's ambitious desires to amass wealth, and extend his arm even from earth to the sun and stars, and finally to hurl God from his throne,'—all which is *too visionary* to deserve a reply,—you brought on your last crowning proof of the immense and obstinate depravity of the world. It was this; that 'God had been *endeavoring* for more than five thousand years to overcome it, and eradicate sin from the universe!' And you asked, in a tone of defeated ambition, 'how much has *God done* towards effecting that object? Let the history of our ungodly race, with the sins and abominations of the present generation, and the groans of the damned in hell, *answer the question*,' &c. So you gravely left

us to conclude, that Jehovah was foiled in his *endeavors* to overcome sin, though greatly assisted in the unequal contest by the Spirit, the Bible and the Clergy ! Merciful heaven ! said I ; that being the case, depravity is not only infinite, but more than omnipotent. Concerning God's defeats &c. see my letters to Mr. Cushing and Mr. Albro.

Lastly. Your next attempt was, to say a few things, which no one could dispute, preparatory to speaking of the new birth. Namely, 'every human being has a *soul* and can't help it. He must retain it 'for better or for worse.' The soul must continue to live. If the soul *dies*, God will die ; and when the soul is buried, God will go to the grave !—The soul must live forever under the moral government of God. Every law has a penalty annexed to its violation ; and whatever the penalty of God's law may be, whether present misery—*limited* or *unlimited*, punishment in a future state, it is best to escape it and get out of danger as quick as possible.'

I shudder, Sir, to carry your doctrine to its conclusions. The Bible says, 'The soul that *sinneth it shall die.*? You say, 'When the soul dies, *God will die*, also ?' Remarks are not necessary ! Your declaration, that 'if the *drunkard* had *liberty* to go to heaven, he would refuse, unless he could carry his *distillery* with him,' was quite amusing ; but it was nothing to the exhortation to saints to go to hell peaceably, if God desired it. You turned off that period with uncommon shrewdness. Calling them '*fellow sinners*' you said :

'be not afraid to follow the divine command, take up your abode in hell; for God will enclose you there with a pure atmosphere, which the gry flames of hell itself cannot invade.' T was an elegant touch upon the *lofty* subject, sides being *new* and interesting. It makes various parts of your system harmonize like so of angels and clashing thunders. It brings two ends together; so that while *sinners* we find their 'hottest hell in heaven,' a *fellow-sinn* would, of course, enjoy the purest air and sweetest heaven, in hell! This is an excell rule; for it works both ways. Such *news* is portant, and ought to be circulated over the wh earth. Give it wings and let it fly.

Every minister at the *four days* meeting, cept Mr. Fisher, argued or inferred, that 'sinr could not go to heaven *in their sins*; or if th could, they would still be miserable!' But w argue that point? Did you ever hear any contend that men would be saved *in their sin*? You were arguing without an opponent.\* I

\* It might have been added here, that when speaking on point, the preachers were careful to frame their language in a manner as to imply that, a certain doctrine would encou sinners to hope they might be saved or go to heaven, in their s just as our opposers generally do, when they wish to slander Universalism. And so the hearers understood them; for, the eye many would at once be turned upon me. It is true, Universa was not named. If it had been, I should have claimed the p lege of repelling the slander, on the spot. Never did men vio more palpably, the ninth commandment, than the clergy do, in particular. They publicly bear false witness against their ne bor.' Universalism teaches the Bible doctrine, that 'God have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of truth.' That he will save his people *from their sins*; save t by turning away every one from his iniquities. The doc

reminded me of an old school-mate, notorious for conceited originality ; who composed a piece to prove that ‘a blind man could not see ; a deaf woman could not hear ; and a dead child could not talk.’ Having argued the points laboriously, *read* the piece, and sat down amidst the smiles of the pupils, the Preceptor asked him if he ever heard these points disputed ? ‘Certainly,’ said he, ‘the Bible is full of *blind* people’s *seeing*,’ &c. But stop, said the teacher, does not the good Book teach you that *miracles* had been wrought on those persons, so that they were *not* blind, nor deaf, nor dead, when they saw, and heard and conversed ? The conceited *wiseacre* dropt his head in confusion, while the school burst forth in a peal of laughter. He was so mortified, that we heard no more of his originality.

Now, Sir, if this little anecdote should be sanctified to you clergymen, and prevent you from disproving in ‘the name of the Lord,’ what no human being was ever so foolish as to maintain, in *any name*, I shall be richly compensated for relating it ; and with sincere gratitude as well as friendship, ever subscribe myself,

Yours very respectfully,

R. STREETER.

*Shirley Village, 10th October, 1832.*

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openly and constantly maintains that, so long as men are sinners, so long they will unavoidably be miserable ; for sin and misery are inseparably connected ; or ‘there is no peace to the wicked.’ And yet, passing strange to tell, men who claim the appellative *Reverend*, have the effrontery to pretend that, this doctrine teaches the monstrous absurdity of man’s immortal happiness, in sin and guilt !!

## LETTER III.

To Rev. Mr. Albro,

CALVINIST MINISTER OF FITCHBURG, MASS.

(God limits his mercy—the new heart—the plan of grace frustrated—God's testimony to the contrary—His sending strong delusion.)

DEAR SIR:

It always appeared to me that a man, who thought he was speaking for the endless weal or woe of his hearers, would naturally manifest great solicitude for the result, and a deep sense of responsibility. Even the physician, familiarized as he is to scenes of sickness and death, performs an operation which is to turn the scale fatally, 'for better or for worse,' with great anxiety and reluctance. Although hope predominates over fear, he turns pale with solicitude, and a shivering pause precedes the capital operation. But how is it with *practitioners in divinity*, who profess to deal out nostrums to the sin-sick souls of young immortals, who will be happy or miserable to eternity, in consequence of their administrations? Do they *act* as though they believed that 'everlasting things' hung upon their labors? Do they ascend the desk with reluctance, and looking fearfully over its front, recoil and shudder, as though

suspicious the first peep would be into the world of wo,

'Where endless crowds of sinners lie,  
Yet wait for fiercer pains?'

Do you Clergymen, of *four-days meeting* memory, proceed with eyes boiling with tears of sympathy, to melt the sinner's icy heart with the fire of love and the eloquence of mercy? Do *you* speak of the inky darkness of hell's impenetrable gloom, with an air of startling fear and responsibility? No Sir; to pretend it, would be a mockery of facts, and a burlesque on your performances. One sentence of ordinary length carries you from earth to heaven, and from thence to hell, with a world of circumstances clustering around you, 'which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of' *inspired* 'men to conceive.' You talk about *heaven* and *hell* with as much familiarity, as a matron would of the surrounding prospect from the garret, or the vermin host which infest the cellar; *unless* you happen to think of the *wrath of God*, when you rouse up in all the majesty of wo, breathing tornadoes, looking flashes of lightning, and speaking in ten-fold thunder.

My remarks in this letter will be chiefly confined to your first sermon from Genesis, vi: 3: '*My spirit shall not always strive with man.*' As you read the text, of such tremendous import, in your view, not a tear trembled in your eye nor the least emotion agitated your frame. But sweeping your white handkerchief politely over

your face, you placed your right hand on the 'Notes and Bible,' and thrusting your left arm deep into your breeches pocket, proceeded to make assertions, with all the sang froid that a pettifogger would state a case of common *trespass* and *small damages*. I was astonished at your lion-hearted, unmoved appearance ; and snatching a moment from close attention, said to myself, 'that is the *boanerges* of the day,—the real son of the thunder of Calvanism!' After saying that, by 'the spirit' was meant divine influence, that it did not barely persuade and teach, but actually *stroved*, *struggled* and *agonized* with sinners, because men were flesh, i. e. sinful ; and that its strivings would be limited, since God had said, 'my spirit shall *not always* strive,' you went upon reasonings, which I shall note under brief, distinct heads.

1. You said ;—'God has a right to limit his own mercy. He has done it, and will do it again, though he is infinite in goodness and mercy and sincerely desirous that every sinner in the universe should repent and be saved. But God won't always strive with sinners ; he'll draw a circle round his mercy and circumscribe and *limit* it to certain bounds beyond which he won't be merciful. And if the sinner goes *out* of the circle which God has marked out for himself, then he will be beyond the reach of mercy and salvation. He will then be given over as finally lost, where the arm of a merciful God can't reach him, nor his eye show *him pity*. And it is right for God thus to limit

his **mercy**; for if he should'nt do it, but pour out his **mercy** and salvation upon all, the evil and the good, and make them all equal, at last, he would do injustice to his own law, and tarnish the spotless glory of his character.'

Now let me ask you, friend Albro, where you got the above information? It is *fresh news* to me, though mostly limited to earth. I never learned before, that, because God would 'not always strive with men,' therefore he would get defeated, and lose the contest. When we read, 'For I will not contend (strive) forever, neither will I be always wroth,' does it mean as you argue, that God will get worsted in the contention, and seek eternal *revenge*, by retaining his anger forever? Nothing can be more absurd. The meaning of the text is perfectly obvious. The striving of the spirit of truth, as manifested in the preaching of Noah, was not to continue always; but 'an hundred and twenty years;' at the end of which, the world continuing unrighteous, God destroyed it with a flood. This is all plain. But that His mercy was limited to earth and did not reach them in a future state, is wholly gratuitous. And, that God was unmerciful in the destruction of the old world, is not only unscriptural but blasphemous; for the devil could do *no worse* than to destroy people *unmercifully!* The antediluvians were strong-bound in the chains of error and habits of vice, as prisoners in a spacious jail-yard, in the present life; and the world itself had become a sort of *charnal*, abounding with all

manner of uncleanness and iniquity. Hence, the object of Deity in sending his forty-day's shower, was wise and benevolent,—to wash and purify the earth; but *not* to send the beings he had made, either man or beast, to a *worse place*. I challenge you, Sir, to produce a particle of evidence from the record of Moses, that antediluvian *people* were any more injured by the flood, than any other creatures who perished in the same manner. But if such had been the *fact*, it would have been mentioned, in preference to every thing else!

How came you by the *news* that God *limits* his *infinite* mercy? (A splendid paradox for a college learned man.) Can *infinite* be *limited*? infinite *mercy* any more than infinite *wisdom* or infinite *power*? For one, I am disposed to ascribe narrow limits to the intellects or honesty of the men, who speak in that manner. You remind me of what David said on the subject. ‘Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the holy One of Israel.’ Psalm lxxviii: 41. And they limited God’s mercy just as you did, ‘by *not remembering* his *merciful* dealings,’ &c. The Bible says, ‘The **LORD** is gracious and *full* of compassion,—and of great mercy. The **LORD** is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.’ ‘His mercy endureth forever.’ Psalm cxlv: 8, 9, &c. ‘For I will be *merciful* to their *unrighteousness* and their *sins* and their *iniquities* will I remember no more.’ **Heb.** viii: 12. ‘For God hath concluded them all

(Jews and Gentiles) in *unbelief*, that *He might have mercy upon all*. O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.' Rom. xi: 32, 33. How does this testimony appear, when contrasted with your assertions to the contrary? Have you investigated the whole of God's unsearchable wisdom, and found He was mistaken in the above declarations, and will not be merciful to all? Or having known His mind, have you engaged to be his counsellor and rectify the mistakes of his ancient counsel and purposes? I am suspicious, Sir, that if the LORD should listen to your improvements in his plans, the clergy will not only boast, 'Have *we* not taken to *us horns* by our own strength?' but the people will lament and answer, saying, yes? 'for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into *hemlock*!' Amos vi: 12, 13.

2. I was pleased with your remarks concerning a new heart or a change of heart. It was a luminous spot in the discourse, and like the red-denning sun-beams on the face of a pool, served to expose the the thorn-hedge with which it was surrounded, and the amphibious monsters that sported and coiled in its bosom. I could not but observe how your friend Brown started and changed his position, when you stated, in broad terms, that 'the sinner needed no new faculties—*no new heart*—to enable him to love God; as he was required to exercise no other faculties of heart than

those he possessed while a sinner: that regeneration or a change of heart simply implied a change of disposition, purpose of action and conduct.' I was glad you glanced upon that subject; for if I had said the same, Mr. Brown might have thought it was an allusion to a sermon he preached from Ezek. xviii: 31, '*Make you a new heart;*' and have said, 'It is just like the Universalists to deny the Bible, and teach that sinners do not need a new heart to enable them to love God.'

3. You declared distinctly and in copious variety of language, that the whole scheme of divine grace in the salvation of sinners, might be resisted and defeated by the sinner himself; and in the following style:

'The sinner is a free agent, and can accept or reject the offers of salvation, just as he pleases. He isn't lost because God hasn't made ample provision for his salvation. 'Tisn't because God delights in the eternal death of the sinner; for He don't, as we are expressly informed in the Bible. It's because he *won't* be saved. And God can't compel him to, without violating his agency; and God has no right to violate the free agency of his creatures. The sinner's salvation depends entirely on his submitting to the strivings of the Holy Spirit. And 'taint possible for God himself to save him on any other terms, than for him to comply with the easy conditions of the gospel. Notwithstanding the plan of salvation, the atonement of Christ, the strivings of the spirit, *the warnings* of God's ministers and the pray-

ers of his people ; the sinner can entirely defeat the whole and *go to hell at last*, if he pleases. God don't force sinners into heaven ; and if he did, it would'nt be *heaven to the sinner*.'

Now, Sir, I will not waste time by arguing the case with you in my own words. You allow that it is the *wish* and *pleasure* of God that men should be made holy and happy. You went so far at the South Village, as to declare that, 'no being in the universé is more sincerely desirous for the universal salvation of the human race, than God himself.' The question, therefore, is, whether He will do according to his pleasure ? The appeal must be made to the Scriptures. Hence, I will simply call up the testimony of a few witnesses, and leave it ~~for~~ others to decide, which party is entitled to the most credit. That there is a direct contradiction between you and the Bible, is obvious.

JEHOVAH saith, 'I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure* :—I have spoken it, I will also do it.' Isa. xlvi: 9, 10, 11. 'For, as the rain cometh down, &c. so shall my word be which goeth forth out of my mouth ; it shall not return unto me void, but *it shall accomplish what I please*, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.' lv: 10, 11. 'The word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear,' saying,

'in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' xlvi: 23. 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; —for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.' Heb. viii: 10, 11. And the illustrious convert of old, said, just after his heart was changed and his *reason* restored by the special agency of God,— 'And He doeth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?' Dan. iv: 35. Is there any good sense, Mr. Albro, in contradicting such testimony, where the experienced Nebuchadnezzar comes up, a living witness for the truth of God's word?

The PROPHET also testifies of CHRIST, that 'he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;—for the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.' Isa. liii: 10, 11. And JESUS himself declares in a voice of bold daring,—' And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me.' The venerable John says, 'We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son ~~to be~~ *as the Saviour of the world.*' And he adds in ~~the~~ *Revelations*, 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever. John xii: 32: 1st John iv: 14. Rev. v: 13. Dare you rise up as the Goliath of men in the

clouds, and, assuming the dark mantle of thunder, attempt to impeach my witnesses, and consign a majority of those whom Christ came to raise from gloom to glory, to the abodes of screaming damnation, forever? Will you allow the sinner an *agency* by which he can tear the proud garlands of honor from the Savior's brow, and baptize them in the eternal infamy of disappointment and defeat? O my soul! 'tell it not in Gath! publish it not in the streets of Askelon! Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice! lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.'

But hark! what voice do I hear? O, it is the emphatic voice of PAUL, a *volunteer witness* in this important cause. Well, hear HIM:

ST. PAUL. 'I speak the truth in Christ and lie not.' 'Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance; being *predestinated* according to the *purpose* of Him who *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*. Who *will* have all men to be *saved*, and to come unto the knowledge of the TRUTH.' Eph.i: 9,10,11. 1st Tim. ii: 4.

Can any mortal be so blind as not to perceive, that this witness contradicts your story of God's *disappointed wishes, desires and anxieties*, concerning which, not a word is said in the whole

Bible? What a piece of practical *atheism*, to represent the Almighty as engaged in a scheme of good *wishes* and benevolent *desires*, which sinners will not allow him to carry into full fruition! If you will produce a text from *your* Bible which speaks of the *wishes* and *anxious desires* of God, I will throw *mine* to the winds; or prove it spurious, for it contains no such revelations.

What a pity it is that Paul could not attend a *four-days meeting*. He could then issue a *new* edition of his Letters, and have the above named passage read as follows, viz. ‘Having concealed from us the mystery of God’s will, that we might keep silent, on *revival occasions*, concerning his purpose, will, good pleasure, and predestination, and His gathering together all things in Christ, and bringing all men to the knowledge of this truth; and be allowed to tell the people, that God’s infinite mercy is *limited*, and he only *wishes* sinners would repent, and, as sincerely *desires* the universal salvation of the world, as any being in the universe; but that the sinner is a free agent and can defeat the plan of salvation, if he pleases and never be gathered with the *few*, who are saved by being kept *from* the knowledge of the truth.’ You might then quote his testimony to admirable effect! As the matter now stands, you must leave Paul with the Andover creed, unnoticed and untouched in the revival scenes. The only decision of character which God exhibited, according to your preaching, was at dooms-day, when he joined hands with the sooty majesty of the bot-

tomless pit, and with that potent ally, succeeded in driving his offspring to the pitchy, smoking domain of hell, to be tormented eternally.

4. You inquired with an air of triumph, ‘What does this passage mean?’ ‘For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ This means something! What does it mean?—Well, Sir, I will try to give you some light on the subject. You certainly need it.

*First.* If it means that the damnation spoken of, is endless, it also means that all you had said about God’s being desirous to have all men saved, was wholly untrue; for it would be a mockery of facts to say such a Being would send a delusion strong enough to deceive and damn those forever, whom he sincerely wished to have saved. Satan himself was never guilty of so great an imposition, as to show his zeal for a sinner’s salvation, by sending a delusion, that he might believe a lie and be damned eternally!

*Second.* The passage says not a word about the future state; and to crown the whole, you stated repeatedly, in your Lecture on Jeremiah, viii: 20, that ‘the salvation of the gospel did not belong to a future world; but implied a deliverance or salvation from sin, unbelief and unreconciliation to God in the *present life*. That the sinner brought upon himself swift destruction and was condemned already, and of course, his damnation slumbered not.’ Hence, I claim your

remarks at the South Village, as a fair reply to the above question. The passage means that while men receive not the truth in the love of it, but believe a lie, they are damned and miserable, by the unalterable law of cause and effect, which is of God. Why, Sir, you had a striking illustration of the text before you. By contradicting yourself, you confused some minds and made them believe, that the salvation spoken of belonged to the future state, and their tears and sighs told you their damnation slumbered not. And that was certainly believing a lie, as you will bear me witness ; for you said in the evening of the same day, that ‘salvation did *not* mean a deliverance from hell in a future state.’ Hence, as you professed to be sent of God, and employed a delusion strong enough to make a few timid young people, and weak old ones, *believe*, what you knew to be an untruth, and to feel condemned or damned, you have both the answer and its application at once. It means, to talk softly, that *if* you were sent of God to attend the *four-days meeting*, it must have been for the express purpose, on his part, of sending a strong delusion to Shirley, that they who reject the truth and believe *the lie*, might be damned, so long as they are pleased with such unrighteous management. This is the most charitable conclusion ; and if the work of delusion be of God, I ought not to be unreconciled, though it produce momentary damnation. It will be overruled for good. But to gratify you, Sir who *are so disturbed when sinners are damned*, allow

me to say, that the delusion was too *weak*, come from whom it would, to deceive *me*; so that I did not believe a syllable of the lie, nor take any pleasure in such unrighteousness; and of course, was entirely safe, undeceived and uncondemned. While weaker and younger souls lay wounded, fluttering, and bleeding before me, my own uninjured spirit was perched upon a strong cliff of the rock of ages; her *faith* rekindling with immortal glories, and *hope* pluming her wings for a triumphant flight.

Excuse me, kind Sir, for *closing* my Letter, as I have written much more than was contemplated. If you have patience to follow me through the series, I think you will not complain of my not doing you tolerable justice. And now, Sir, I solemnly entreat you, in view of all the startling facts of your preaching, and all the glaring *news* which you announced from *three worlds*, heaven, earth, and hell, to discharge your moral obligations faithfully, and ‘pluck me as a brand from the burning,’ if you think I am not too far gone, to render a grasp comfortable and safe.

Yours with Christian regards,

R. STREETER.

*Shirley Village, 12th October, 1832.*

## LETTER IV.

To Rev. Mr. Howe,

CALVINIST MINISTER OF PEPPERELL, MASS.

(Solemn meetings considered—sinners must *submit, submit*—the Shibboleth of Calvinism, &c.)

RESPECTED FRIEND :

I was one of your most attentive hearers, at the late *continuous* meeting in this place. You commenced by a few remarks which appeared to be extemporaneous. After commending a discourse, which, ‘hearing you had not heard,’ as you were mostly engaged in reading over your own manuscript, you recommended *deep, awful solemnity*; and expressed a *solemn* hope that the meeting would grow more and more *solemn* to the close. And I thought you entered into the spirit of the occasion; for if I believed your doctrine, I would be *solemn*, too! Yes I would be *so solemn* as to refuse a participation in all amusement and cheerfulness, and tear the first smile from my cheek, that should dare light on such *solemn* ground. Sooner should the marble statue greet with a living smile the eyes which gaze on it, than my countenance glow with mirth, did I believe that my own *children* were *barely exposed* to end-

less damnation, and that my fellow-creatures would drink in its boiling poisons to ‘ages of hopeless end.’

Your remarks, however, considering the light in which you view the subject, did not exactly chime with the text, from which your brother Albro had just spoken. ‘*I will arise and go to my father.—And he arose and came to his father.*’ Luke xv : 18—20. He represented the returning sinner, by the returning and joyous prodigal, on whose account it was said, ‘bring hither the fatted calf’—‘and let us eat and be merry ;—‘and there was music and dancing.’ This, Mr. Albro considered, a lively representation of the joys of heaven. And too *lively* it was, sure enough, to look much like *awful solemnity*! The father—the company—the servants—the prodigal and all, appeared to be as merry and musical as would comport with temperance and moderation in the midst of festivity and rejoicing. Judging from the preacher’s comparisons, I should not think heaven a very solemn place! But *you are* excusable, Sir; since you were so much engaged in looking over your own notes, and peeping under his arm to see how much more he had to read, that you did not consider how the subject was applied.—But stop! let us pause a moment! I do not know but I am too fast in my conclusions. I had like to have forgotten to mention the only person at the feast of the returning prodigal, which escaped Mr. Albro’s searching eyes. I mean ‘the elder brother,’ who by parity

reasoning, represents our godly priests; who having had pious parents to bring them up in the way they should go, never have departed from it, so as to wander off into the far country of sin and prodigality. This 'elder brother' was *solemnly angry* that the prodigal was so joyfully received. He doubtless thought that a fast would excite suitable solemnity. And finally, after holding a solemn meeting with his father, he very piously and solemnly refused to go in, and join the gay and cheerful multitude. He could see no more justice in making him barely *equal* with his sinful brother, than Mr. Albro could, in God's making all men equal in eternity.

You were no less unhappy, Sir, in selecting 'the day of Pentecost,' in evidence of *solemn* meetings. For, notwithstanding the multitudes, who were mere 'lookers on in Venice,' were 'amazed and confounded,' it does not appear that they were presented with any striking proofs of what you call solemnity; for while some inquired, 'what meaneth this?' others answered, 'and mocking said, *these men are full of new wine!*' Do men appear very *solemn*, when full of wine? Did you ever know an instance in which a multitude of spectators at a *four-days* meeting, suspected that the saints, would-be-saints, and *convicted* sinners, who were afflicting their souls and hanging down their heads like bulrushes, were intoxicated with the juice of the grape? Were you ever compelled to reason from the *hour of the day*, to prove the sobriety of your au-

dience? And like Peter, lift up your voice and say, ye men of the world, and all ye that dwell in this town, be this known unto you and hearken to my words: for these *solemn looking* people 'are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the *third hour* of the day.'—*nine* in the morning! The presumption then is, that whereas you are *solemn*, the apostles and true saints were *joyful*. Their countenances were lighted up with the smile of joy and gladness, when they received the fulfilment of the saying, 'thou shalt make me *full of joy* with thy *countenance*.\* See Acts, 2d chapter.

If you wish to encourage *solemn meetings*, you

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\* There is a manifest difference between *solemn* and *serious*, *gloomy* and *grave*. The trembling 'shepherds' were *solemn*, while sore afraid; but the angel was *serious* in announcing the cheering message, 'Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy.' Luke ii. 9, 14. The *gloomy* fears of 'the keeper of the prison,' tempted him to commit suicide; but when he understood 'the word of the Lord,' he was *gravely* joyful. Acts xvi. 27, 32. How awfully *solemn* must the ship's-crew have felt, 'when neither sun nor stars for many days appeared,' and the tempest raging, 'all hope that they should be saved was taken away.' And yet, what sober rejoicing must have been produced, when Paul's word was accredited—'And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.' Acts xxvii. 17—25. Hundreds of similar cases might be quoted, which would illustrate the difference between solemnity and seriousness, gloominess and gravity. The *novelty* of these views, though just in themselves, rendered them questionable in the minds of some candid readers. There was no *trifling* with the subject. It is becoming in the believers of *endless misery*, to be *solemn*; and profane to be otherwise. Nothing is more ridiculous in my view, than for a minister, professing to believe I am bound to an endless hell, to meet me with a cheerful smile on his face. It either means that he does not believe his doctrine, or that he is glad I am going to be damned! Calvinism produces gloom; Universalism, glory. The tree is known by its fruit.

should quote the only text in which that phrase is found in the Bible. Isa. i: 13. ‘Bring no more vain oblations, &c. it is iniquity, even your **SOLEMN MEETINGS.**’ Those meetings as may be seen by the connection, were very much like *protracted* meetings in these days. The priests pretended that they were *required* of God thus to tread his courts; they offered a multitude of sacrifices, and made many prayers. And so do those who get up *four-days* meetings. They sacrifice their own time and talents, and make the people offer sacrifices of time and property to hear and support them, and prayers are said over by scores! The resemblance is truly striking. But what saith God on the subject?—‘To what purpose are the multitude of prayers unto me? saith the Lord! Who hath required this at your hands? Bring no more vain oblations, &c.—When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make *many prayers*, I will not hear you. It is iniquity, even your *solemn meetings!*’ How wonderful the coincidence of circumstances. You *Calvinists* made a world of prayers at the late meeting; some of which could not be answered unless Deity can understand confused sentences, and incoherent petitions. But it is certain your prayers were rejected; otherwise, not only all this town, but all the world would have been converted to Calvinism before now. There were prayers enough made to save a thousand worlds like this, if God had *heard them*, in the Bible sense. You had long

and short prayers, cold and warm prayers, and dull and agonizing prayers. No one could say there was any deficiency in number or variety. For myself I found no fault. I wished however, that you had had an Edward Payson present, to pray ‘in words that breathe, and thoughts that burn.’

There is an account of a very solemn, distressing meeting in 1st Kings, chap. 18, where were also many warm, agonizing prayers. And the prophet *Elijah* was so rude as to mock the solemn performers, and tell them to ‘cry aloud; for either their God was *talking*, or on a *journey*, or else he was *asleep* and must be *awaked!*’ Though Elijah is a pretty safe example, I feel too serious to imitate him.

There is another report of a *protracted* meeting which convened on the plains of Dura, and was solemnly kept up from day to day, in order to convert three obstinate fellows, who seemed determined to out-sin the day of *fury*, as well as grace! Arguments were used, quite as *fiery* as those employed in this town. The only difference is, that the *fire* of old, would *really* burn some people; while the *fire* you speak of, only makes some people *believe*, that *some* will *really* be burned! See 3d chapter of Daniel.

And now, Sir, that I may not be burthensome, I will make but few remarks on your sermon, from 2d Kings, v: 13. ‘*My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?*’

The style of the sermon was good; and you

managed it so as to make it bear on one point, viz. the duty of the sinner to *submit* to God. The sinner was not required to do any 'great thing,' but merely to submit on the *easy* terms of the gospel; repentance and faith. Let me seriously inquire,

1. Do you really think, Sir, it is an *easy* task for the *totally depraved* sinner, to repent and obey God perfectly? Is it not so 'great a thing' to change the wicked heart from sin to holiness, that you ascribe it to God, instead of man? You contradict your whole system and your own conduct, if you call it a *small* affair! 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the Leopard his spots? Then may those who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well!' If a change of *habits* be so difficult, what must a change of *nature* be?

2. When the sinner has submitted, as you call it, do you then say it is *no great work*? Let facts speak, and the reports of every week answer. The moment a person *submits*, it is blazoned to the four corners of the earth, as a marvellous affair! A great change has been wrought and a great shouting ensues! The minister and his convert are so overwhelmed with the immensity of the work, that both ascribe it wholly to God!

3. Can a sinner, or a saint, avoid believing a doctrine when convinced *it is true*? In other words, can any being disbelieve what he believes to be truth? Does not the mind always submit, *when the evidence is strong or heavy enough to*

produce entire conviction? Most certainly. What do you mean then by urging the unbeliever to submit? He will surely believe your doctrine when convinced it is true! And would you have him *profess* it, *before* he believes? But suppose the sinner does submit, and by that *small act*, change his nature, his habits, and endless destiny, as you would have it. He repents and believes Calvinism! Is that all? No; he makes himself a bond-slave for life. He must *keep submitting*, or be doomed to hell by the clergy. He must submit and join the church; pray vocally night and morning; support the minister; contribute to Tract, Bible, Missionary, Education, Sunday Union, and all other orthodox Societies; help get up revivals; go to prayer meetings, protracted meetings and the like; continue to *profess* Calvinism and *hear* rank Arminianism, or be excommunicated and sent to hell at last. This is a modest representation. The picture does not stand out in bold relief; but appears in the mildest water-colors of truth.

Suffer me, friend Howe, to unbosom myself to you frankly. When I see a host of well-dressed, full-fed ministers, of any Order, rising up, one after another, and besetting the people to *submit*, *SUBMIT*, and virtually relinquish the rose bud of innocent amusement, for the bramble-bush of dread superstition, it reminds me of the *Portuguese beggars*; a formidable class of men in that country. They assembled in hordes, an getting into the best places of entertainment, demand *the privilege of tarrying three or four days!*

When these sturdy fellows meet a decent looking person, they demand *money*, without leaving the amount, in all cases, to the giver. *One begs* in the name of St. Anthony, another in the name of St. Francis, and the next for the Virgin Mary, till having exhausted their pretended claims, they unite and *rob* him of what remains, for the glory of God! They only cry submit, submit, submit! They ask no ‘great thing;’ only *submit*, and all is well. If nothing striking is *mirrored* to your eye, Sir, in this historic glass, why, then nothing personal was meant ; and of course, I shall neither give offence nor have occasion to ask pardon.

As you appear to be a candid man, I want you to give me the true *pass-word* of priestcraft, according to modern work and lectures. How shall I know what the real *Shibboleth* is, which will be required at the passage of the great Jordan? How shall one know he is truly a child of God by *conversion*? The Methodist, Baptist, Freewillers, Calvinists and Quakers, all profess to be born again by the special agency of the Holy Spirit, and yet each sect has its own peculiar pass-word. The character and religious complexion of the new-born soul, almost uniformly agree with the *denomination* under which the conversion was wrought. The offspring of Methodist revivals, are Methodists, and those of Calvinian revivals are Calvinists ; and so on, through the whole list of *sects*. How happens this, if the work be of *one holy Spirit*? Why this strange compound of *irreconcileable opinions, feelings, and conduct*?

Are the wonder-born offspring of the spirit, like honest Jacob's herds and flocks, 'ring-streaked, spotted, and grizzled?' or shall we join with Jeremiah,—' Mine heritage is unto me as a *speckled bird*; the birds round about are against her. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard—and being desolate it mourneth unto me.' But can you inform me with certainty on this subject? Not a speaker at the *four-days* meeting, pretended to *know* that *he* himself had got the real 'Shibboleth.' Each one expressed a hope—rather faint in some cases, that he should not be slain as an Ishmealite at the passages of Jordan. Even the prompt Mr. Chickering and the candid Mr. Fisher, both said, in the Inquiry meeting, that *they* did not *know* as they were new-born, that their hearts were so deceitful and desperately wicked that they had infinite reason to fear, lest they themselves were deceived. Here then, we have an important fact, and it is presented in its true light. The fact is, that even the Clergy do not know but they are pronouncing the wrong word, and learning their converts to say *sibboleth*! This is evident from their own honest acknowledgements, and from the vast variety of sects, with their spiritual captains and leaders. These *spirituals* *hope* they are right, but do not *know* it. They are yet in darkness and uncertainty, as to the final result. They *hope* they can give the real pass-word; and so did the Ishmaelites who said, 'Let us go over Jordan,' but were slain, notwithstanding. The fact is, Mr. Howe, that which is *shibboleth* in one denomination, is *sibbo-*

*leth* in another; and yet all are alike hopeful of being born of God as true Gileadites. Nay worse; for, your own order is now in confusion on this very point. What is *orthodoxy* at *New-Haven*, is *heterodoxy* at *Andover*; and the ‘*new measures*’ for getting up revivals, the very measures practised here, are denounced at *Williamstown* and many other places, as *mere tricks* and vulgar slangs, to excite the passions! Nay, worse yet; for the very men who studied *Calvinism* four years at *Andover*, and who weave its essential doctrines into the Creeds of their Churches, come to the ‘revival meeting, and preach *ultra-arminianism*, for four days in succession; and, without exhibiting one point of exclusive Calvinism, cry, *submit* or be damned! Just tell me then, *what you would have us believe*; or we must say, ye are ‘deceitful workers.’

In coming to a close, permit me to remind you, Sir, that you said, ‘the *soul* was of *more value* than the *whole world*.’ And hence, if *He* who declared, ‘All souls are mine’ does not see fit to secure his own property from *final destruction* and *ruin*, I beg, *you*, in Christ’s name, to interpose your strenuous endeavors to prevent that woful catastrophe. Your prudent and gracious interposition, will be appreciated, according to the benevolence of your motives, rather than the advantage I should expect to receive.

With sentiments of unfeigned Esteem,  
I remain yours,

R. STREETER.

*Shirley Village, 16th October, 1832.*

## LETTER V.

To Rev. George Fisher,

CALVINIST MINISTER OF HARVARD, MASS.

(The man Christ Jesus ; the Mother of the very God of vengeance, or, ye shall not surely die; Calvinism abandoned ; Dr. Whipple consulted ; Creeds still Calvinistic.)

DEAR SIR :

It gives me pleasure to write you on the subject of the late *continuous meeting* in this town, as I can thereby bear public testimony to the politeness and kindness which you extended to me, on that occasion, as well as every other in which we have chanced to meet... Not have I been apprised of your following the *examples* of some of your ministering brethren in this region, by attempting to circulate *false institutions* and clandestine slander. Blessed be God, that I have reason, thus far, to believe that you have a soul too noble and a mind too manly to stoop to such contemptible baseness. And I should be thrice happy, if I could see you withdraw from the fellowship of such instruments of cruelty, and say, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united ; for, in their anger they slew a man, and in their

*self-will* they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel.' Gen. xlix. 6. 7.

I listened to both the discourses which you delivered in this town, at the late meeting, with uncommon satisfaction, considering, I could not assent to all your doctrines. The sermons were framed with the care and skill of a master-workman, in a chaste, perspicuous style, and pronounced in a serious and impressive manner. Though not generally very impassioned in your mode of speaking, yet, I must say, there were some appeals in your last discourse, which had a mellowing, powerful effect upon the very soul. So long as ostensible meekness, candor, and human benevolence are held in repute, I think such performances will be listened to with devout attention. These are no fustian compliments, but the expressions of unbiased opinion, having reference to the general influence which would be exerted on cultivated minds.

1. Your sermon from Acts xiii. 38, was a systematical discussion of the *need, nature, medium or means* and *blessing* of 'forgiveness.' '*Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.*' It would be a waste of time and paper to give even a synopsis of your views. They were just such as we should expect, from every man of your order, who meant to give a fair expose of the doctrine of 'forgiveness,' according to his own creed. But, Sir, I was sur-

prised you did not feel embarrassed with the words, '*this man*.' Be it known that through *this man*, forgiveness is preached. What *man* was that? Answer. '*The man* Christ Jesus; the one mediator *between God and men*.' Now, Sir, did you mean to admit and teach that '*this man*' was the *very God* by whom he was sent? So it would seem. Why not join with Catholics then, and honor '*Mary* as the august Mother of *God*.' Their journals have recently announced that '*the first Catholic Church in Vermont*, received the venerable name of *Mary, the august Mother of God*, and was accordingly placed under her powerful patronage.' What Protestant will not shudder at such language? And, yet, every Trinitarian holds to the same doctrine, and in precisely the same manner, the words excepted. The Virgin *Mary* was *really* the Mother of that adored *being*, whom you consider the **VERY GOD** of the universe. Was she not, therefore, the august Mother of the *very God* in whom you believe? Let all Trinitarians come out with equal candor, and render honor to whom honor is due. If they worship the Son, as the incomprehensible God, let them be consistent, and honor *Mary*, as his incomprehensible Mother. The mystery will, then, be as splendid as it is mysterious.

2. I discovered very plainly, Sir, that you rested your whole scheme of forgiveness, on the supposition, that Jehovah, as a Moral Governor, had revealed a law to his creatures, which *threatened* every violation of said law with endless mis-

ery. And hence, that every sinner, ‘whether guilty of the sins of omission or commission,’ must suffer that penalty, unless *forgiven* by the Law-giver. The awful and positive *threatenings* of God, seemed to linger about your path-way, like so many roaring lions, seeking whom they might devour. Your benevolent heart yearned for poor sinners, and you expressed no doubt but that our Creator was disposed to pity and befriend them, as far as circumstances would permit. But the difficulty was, that He had *published* his *law* and its infinite penalty and threats, and it had been violated. Hence, God was constrained to adopt an *expedient*, as you called it, in order to open a way by which He could be merciful to sinners, and yet maintain the honor of his holy law, and be *just* as well as *gracious*. Really, Sir, I felt more unpleasantly on your account, that a man of such generous feelings and noble talents should be found advocating such a wretched system of theology, than that the object of your worship should be encumbered with so many embarrassments! The *one* I knew to be *real*; the *other*, altogether *imaginary*. I beg you, kind Sir, to muster up moral courage so as to review your doctrine impartially. It would be impossible for you to believe it an hour afterwards. Why, to my apprehension, it smacks highly of *atheism*! I speak kindly and deliberately. Can any well-informed Theist believe, for a moment, that the Great Creator of the universe made a law, at the birth of *the world*, which so much as renders it *inconveni-*

*ent* for him to be merciful to his offspring? Much less, that **HE** is driven to *expedients*, in order to get along with his government, and not either dis-honor his own character or make all his intelligent creation miserable forever? Impossible! Such a being, call him by what name you will, is worthy of no confidence nor adoration among enlightened minds. He would answer for none but such as could adore an Idol, instead of the great '**I AM, THAT I AM.**'

But, dear Sir, I hope you will not be surprised when you see me occupying my own ground in this investigation. I am *alone* responsible for these remarks; not knowing but I am going fur-ther than my own denomination would approve. Be that as it may, you must allow me to inquire, how you learned that God *threatened* his crea-tures in any law, either *penal* or not? If the in-spired penman wished to convey the idea, that God *threatened* mankind with the *penalty* of his law, or *endless death*, how happens it, that no such statements are found in the Bible? With all the hue and cry which is got up, concerning the *nature* of the Divine *threatenings*, no one, as I know of, has had presence of mind, to inquire for the scripture authority for applying that word to God. I have never seen the passage which says that God is a *threatening* character. We read much of His *promises*, but nothing of his *threats*. The Bible contains declarations from God in his holy law, by which we may all know what the *consequences* of our conduct will be.

And so do human governments proclaim laws, and the consequences attached to their violation. But who can find a chapter of *threatenings* in our statutes? It is barely possible that such words may be found among the *blue-laws*, and records of Salem witchcraft. A *promise* implies the bestowment of some *benefit*; and of course a *threatening*, the infliction of *injury*. No being can *threaten* another with *good*. This frightful word and its relatives, is found in Acts iv. 17, 21, 29 and ix. 1. Eph. vi. 9. 1 Peter ii. 23. Now read for yourself, Sir, and see who ‘breathed out threatenings’ after the manner of the present age. ‘The rulers, elders and scribes,’ and the rest of the Jewish council, ‘*threatened* the apostles;’ and they reported what ‘the chief *priests* and elders said unto them.’ And lifting up their voice with one accord, said—‘And now, *Lord*, behold *their threatenings*.’ They did not call on the people to hear the Lord’s threatenings.’ And Saul was authorized by the same tribunal, ‘to *breathe* out *threatenings* and *slaughter*.’—There is a world of such *pious breath*, in these days.—Even *masters* were commanded to ‘forbear threatening’ their servants or slaves, in apostolic times. And it is said of Christ, ‘that when he suffered he *threatened* NOT; but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously.’ The word *threaten* appears well, when used in reference to *cruel, angry, malicious* beings; but is almost blasphemous when applied to our merciful Father in *heaven*. He declares the results of his law; but

never menaces and *threatens* with *real injury*. God can no more *injure* a being, than he can change his own nature.\*

What appears worse, let me inquire, than for imperfect worms of the dust, to *threaten* each other with personal evil and injury! Such things at best, indicate the exercise of arbitrary power. The circumstances of human weakness *may render* it necessary to *excite fear*, by threatening the infliction of injury, in self defence. But parents who would wish to cherish right feelings and affections in their offspring, will never *threaten* them; but persuade them that every rebuke and chastisement they inflict, is *not* to injure, but to benefit and reform the disobedient. The gen-

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\* *Threaten* is of saxon origin and *menace* of Latin, but mean the same. Neither of them is applied to God, in the scriptures. ‘By the terrors of the Lord, we are *persuaded*,’ not threatened. The chastenings of God, do not injure, but produce submission and holiness. The Greek *APEILEO*, *to threaten*, *menace*, is deduced by some, from *apo*, meaning *from*, and *ELEO* *to withdraw*; because *threats* are used to withdraw men from their purposes. But I am inclined to think with others, that the word is of Hebrew derivation, and signifies ‘*vaunt*, *to boast*;’ and, we may add, dominion in a cruel manner. At any rate, this definition best agrees with the common use of the word *threaten*.

Men, who confess themselves sinners, become so religiously proud in the desk, that they boast of their delegated authority from God, and vaunt or play the braggart to wonderful effect. They threaten and foam in the name of God, as though they were ministers of slaughter instead of salvation. These are the only threatenings that produce the desired effect. Let the Clergy threaten people, with all the eloquence of their rage, *in the name of the Devil*, and who, excepting a few ignorant souls that worship him, half as much as they do the *Lord*, would be at all alarmed? None. In order to frighten people, effectually, they must be made to believe that the Almighty has *threatened* them with endless evil. But we search in vain for the bible text which says, *God is a threatener!*

eral influence of ministerial threatenings, in the name of God, is pernicious in the extreme. It induces men, the moment they are angry, to *pray profanely* that the *threats of the sanctuary* may be executed. The same doctrine and language, substantially, which are called gospel threatenings, when *breathed out* by the priest, are denounced as damnable profanity when borne on the breath of a parishioner, though uttered in a tone, far more congenial with their meaning. These, Sir, are my views, in brief, and it is hoped you will examine them with Christian candor.

3. You taught, Sir, that *forgiveness* of sins did not imply salvation from the *desert* of punishment, but from punishment itself. That the finally impenitent will continue to *deserve*, and actually suffer the awful penalty of God's violated law; while the *penitent* will *deserve* the same, but be saved by the *forgiveness* of *deserved* punishment. But, my dear Sir, were you preaching *according* to your text, or *from* it, in the above instance? The text speaks of 'the *forgiveness* of *sins*;' you spake of forgiving the *awful penalty* of God's violated law, by which you mean endless punishment! Is there not a manifest difference? Does the text encourage the barbarous doctrine, that a being who *has been* a sinner, will forever *deserve* to be punished, though he becomes perfectly sinless and holy? Horrible doctrine of retaliation! But I was glad you stated your doctrine honestly, just as Calvinists always should state it. *My eyes were at once directed to your brother Albro,*

who was in the desk with you. And, as I smiled at the frankness of your remarks, he looked me wistfully in the face, as if suspicious that I perceived the irreconcileable difference between his preaching and yours. It was evident he was saying to himself,—‘Does Mr. Streeter discover how directly that doctrine contradicts what I preached last evening?’ For, be it remembered that Mr. Albro preached a lecture in our school-house, on the night preceding, from Jeremiah viii. 20 : ‘*The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.*’ His first object was, to prove, distinctly, that the salvation offered in the gospel, was not a deliverance from merited punishment in a future state! ‘He allowed that such a deliverance would, indeed, be a great salvation, if it were offered in the gospel; but it was not. He quoted scripture, and reasoned cogently on the point; and I presume, satisfied every hearer, that the salvation of the gospel, was salvation from sin, darkness of mind, alienation from God, the influence and bondage of the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air.’ The text itself, and the use he wished to make of it, obliged Mr. Albro to reason correctly, at first: and having the truth on his side, he reasoned powerfully. And to do the man justice, I must add that, in my opinion, his lecture was worth an hundred times more than both his sermons!

But now comes ‘the rub,’ Sir; for you contradicted Mr. Albro, more pointedly, than I should like to do in my desk, before the same people,

even on points in which I disagree with him, lest I should be accused of personality. If you are right, he was certainly wrong ; and so *vice versa*. A more palpable contradiction cannot be conceived, than exists between you and him ! If your preaching was calculated to lead into all truth, his would lead into error. The two views are just as irreconcileable, as darkness and light. You know I have not misunderstood your meaning ; and he, and every candid and discerning person in his audience, knows, I have not misrepresented him. His argument was clear, and his illustrations appropriate and convincing. On hearing you contradict him so *flatly*, I smiled for admiration, and said to myself, ‘Who shall decide when Doctors disagree ?’

Suffer me to put your views into the crucible, for a few moments, and see how they will abide the test of fair criticism.

You hold that, at the birth of the world and of man, God issued a holy law, saying : ‘*In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*’ an *eternal death* ! That all men have violated that law, and deserve to suffer its just penalty, which is endless punishment in a future state ; and that *all men* will forever *continue to deserve* it, as much as they do now, or did at the time of transgression. And yet you believe that, those *who repent*, will *not surely die* this eternal death, but will most surely be saved from the punishment which they will forever deserve !

*Do you not find yourself in a sad dilemma?*

When you contradicted your friend from Fitchburg, we thought but little of it ; because, *we* ministers are in the habit of contradicting each other. But when any one presumes to contradict Him who spake from heaven, what shall we say ? Let us spur up our minds and memories a little, Sir, and answer the following question : viz.

What preacher was it that indulged in similar indiscretion, in olden time, and said, ‘Ye shall not surely die : for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be *open-ed*, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil’—Gen. iii. 4, 5. Whosoever *that preacher* might be, he was certainly in the very heart of the doctrine you advanced. For, if any of those who sin, *do escape* the punishment due to their crimes, and do *not die*, as God said they should, then, *God did know it*, as well as he knew they existed ! He knew they would repent and become god-like, or as gods, and know good and evil so well, as to forsake the evil and choose the good ; and that he would not surely subject them to the ‘eternal death’ of hell in a future state. It is hardly necessary to dispute such views ; for the throats that can receive such dogmas, would not be likely to quackle much, in swallowing camels !

Do not suppose I mean to accuse you, friend Fisher, of *intentionally* espousing the doctrine of ‘the old preacher !’ Far from it. I leave such labors of love and politeness, to those, who heap such encomiums on my head. I simply

mean to show you the legitimate relations and results of your system of doctrine. My reasoning is aimed *against* the argument, not the *man*.—A word to the wise will be sufficient. God said, ‘*In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;*’ and so the Serpent understood him; and to give all their dues, he framed his denial with strict reference to God’s assertion. He said, ‘*For God doth know, that in the day,*’ &c. He said they should not surely die, according to God’s word; and I am sorry that you or any other good man should be so inconsiderate as to imitate his bad example. And, as Paul said, on another occasion, Brother, ‘*I hope better things of you, in future.*’ In regard to the light in which your notions of forgiveness represents the demands of justice of the law, I refer you to my next letter, which will be addressed to Mr. Chickering, of Bolton.

3. On your afternoon’s discourse, from Jeremiah, viii. 22, ‘*Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*’ my remarks will be few. You made the whole sermon *centre* in one point, viz., that the sinner might be saved, if he chose. God was willing and sincerely desirous to have all men saved; but they must comply with conditions of salvation, and *submit* to gospel terms. There was nothing in the way but the unwillingness of the sinner to repent and be saved, &c. Please consult my letters to Mr. Cushing and Mr. Howe on that point.

*But are you serious and considerate, Sir, in*

saying *all men may be saved?* Have you entirely given up the doctrine of *election, predestination, and foreknowledge?* Or do you wish to come under the animadversions of the famous Dr. GRIFFIN in his letter to Rev. Mr. Eddy, of Canandaigua, (N. Y.) on the subject of *protracted meetings?* Dr. Griffin says, ‘Though the doctrines of *sovereignty, election, and dependence* [on God for repentance and salvation] may be disproportionately urged, yet I have found them, in the revivals of forty years, of *great efficacy* in causing the sinner to die to all hope in himself, and casting him wholly upon God. His obligations to immediate repentance ought certainly to be urged with the most imperious decision: but to *confine* the preaching to the neglect of other doctrines, is to turn the whole into declamation, and to encourage that *destructive self-dependence* which ought to be our constant labor to oppose. It is in short withholding an *essential part* of that body of truth which unitedly is ‘the sword of the spirit.’ The Doctor accuses, if I may so speak, those preachers who neglect the doctrines of God’s sovereignty, and *election* of some to everlasting life’ &c. of employing ‘mere tricks to move the *passions*’—of using ‘quaint and questionable expedients for effect,’ alluding probably to the practice of asking *anxious* persons ‘to rise up in public assemblies, either to desire *prayers* or to proclaim their determination to *submit* at once,’ by repairing to some other place with a handful of priests to inquire into their feelings, &c. He

speaks of a 'low and barbarous *cant*,' and 'the *slang of anxious meetings*, and the like,' in much *harsher* terms than I shall employ, in describing the meeting in this town. If his letter had been designed to reprove the methodistic declamation which came down in torrents on the 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th instant, it could hardly have been made to set more closely. Almost every discourse, with the exception of yours, was a boisterous tirade of rank, uncultivated Arminianism. The Divine Sovereignty, this side the day of judgment, was virtually denied, scoffed, and given to the winds. Not a statement was advanced that God had any will, purpose, or plan of grace, aside from his *wishes, desires* and *anxious* willingness that free agents might be saved from his own wrath ! This I sacredly declare to be the naked truth, so far as relates to the *fourteen* discourses, and many addresses, and numerous prayers which I heard ; and hold myself responsible to a world, to answer to the fact, at the bar of God before an assembled universe ; when its verity may be tested by the book of the recording Scribe, written with heaven's pen, in lines of light and characters of fire !

Well, Sir, the question I now propose, as in the immediate presence of the great 'I AM,' is, have you abandoned the doctrine of *Calvinism*, so far, as relates to what Dr. GRIFFIN calls, *sovereignty, election, and dependence* ; which have been found to be of *great efficacy*, in the experience of *forty years*, in causing the sinner to die to all hope

in himself, and cast himself wholly upon God? Or are you still a believer in these doctrines, but disposed to withhold them from your hearers at these *protracted* meetings, and, 'by mere tricks' of declamation, encourage that *destructive self-dependence* which you ought constantly to oppose?' These are *solemn* questions, if your preaching is true; and I press them upon your consideration with seriousness, and with reference to 'that great Day for which all other days were made.'

My reasons are briefly these. *First*; if you do hold with all the distinguished men of your order, ancient and modern, not excepting Drs. Beecher, Ely, Woods, Tyler, and Griffin, to the doctrines of *particular election* and *saint's perseverance*, are you not wholly inexcusable for not openly avowing them on those occasions, where 'the essential part of the body of truth' is imperiously needed, to supplant the body of error? Those conversions must be deceptive and spurious, which are produced by receiving one *half* of the truth for the *whole*. Half a truth, if taken for the whole, is a lie, to all intents and purposes. It is a deception. If you do not believe those doctrines, you owe it to yourself, your church and congregation, your fellow-creatures and your God, to say so, in words that bear the precision of knowledge and the clearness of light. You owe this recantation to your church, and the denomination to which it belongs. For, the very creed to which they subscribe, recognises the

doctrine of divine sovereignty, foreknowledge election, and the final perseverance of all saints in terms which cannot be explained nor frittered away. I say it to you, Sir, and to all, with deliberation and forethought, that I will hold myself responsible to forfeit a thousand dollars, if you will produce a *regular* creed of any *Calvinistic* church in this county, that does not *virtually* include the doctrines before named, by a fair and legitimate construction of language; and, furthermore, will never preach a sermon afterwards in favor of universal grace and happiness. But every man knows that these points are essential to genuine Calvinism.

Hoping you will kindly receive my protestations of respect and friendship, and bestow upon my remarks the consideration they deserve,

I am with Christian affection,

R. STREETER.

*Shirley Village, Oct. 18th, 1832.*

## LETTER VI.

*To Rev. Mr. Chickering,*

CALVINIST MINISTER OF BOLTON, MASS.

Begging the Question—Calvinism and Popery—Strife with God  
—The King and his Son—Story of the pious father and son.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND :

As I am some fifteen years before you, in the race we are running ‘on the mortal side of human existence,’ you will not expect an apology for addressing you on the great subject of religion. It will be my aim to heed the admonition of Paul, ‘Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren.’ This, I shall be the more likely to do, since, after more than twenty-two years’ constant warfare under the blood-sprinkled banner of the Cross, I do not feel half as much confidence in my own skill and prowess as I did in my 19th year, when buckling on the whole armour of God, I seized the sword of the spirit and rushed into the hottest battles of the spiritual campaign. I was sometimes reminded of the fact, that the race is not always to the swift, nor the victory to the strong; for, being too precipitate in my movements, or too ambitious of obtaining some conspicuous post in the engagement, I have occasionally, laid hold of the

blade of the sword instead of the *hilt*, and as my antagonist got the grasp which I ought to have had myself, have been obliged to let go my hold, and suffer the mortification of defeat, where I had anticipated the proudest victories. I was strikingly reminded of those by-gone days, Sir, by observing the prominent part which you took in the services of the recent meeting in this town; especially, when, standing in the watch-tower of *sub-Calvinism*, you read the following text: ‘*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*’ 2 Cor. x. 4. Ah, thought I, (while you were adjusting your notes, which did not appear to set easy on the face of the good Book,) that great subject would have come with a better grace from ‘the Goliath of Groton,’ who was on watch service, at your left. But finding you armed with a ‘coat of mail,’ which I suspect had been worn before, but newly fitted up to suit the fashion of the day and accommodate the wearer, I listened with admiration, while you were beating the air with all the activity and vigor of youth;\* fighting pitched battles with men of straw on earth; conquering whole armies in the clouds and meeting a fatal repulse only, when you attempted to route the forces and storm the citadels of the *sooty* majesty ‘of the bottomless pit.’ that Waterloo assault, you would have been taken captive, had you not retreated with haste a

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\*Mr. C. was caricaturing Universalism and Unitarian after the old jaded-out manner, without the moral courage of *ing them by name.*

hoisted a flag of truce, postponing further engagements, to 'the day of judgment,' when all the belligerents of *three worlds* are to meet before an Almighty Umpire, for the amicable adjustment of old affrays, quarrels, and fightings! And your subsequent conduct agreed with the terms of the stipulation; for you hardly spoke disrespectfully of his *pitchy honor* afterwards. I think he would show a querulous disposition, to find fault with your performances which followed.

Not to flatter, however, I must do myself the pleasure of saying, your Sermon was written and delivered in a strain of eloquence which would do honor to a better cause; and far above either of the other three. It evinced a vividness of imagination and a nervous grasp of thought, which would appear to admirable advantage, if employed in close reasoning and sound argument. A few questions on the Sermon, must suffice; the substance of which is before me.

1. Why did you take it for granted, that '*the weapons*' of apostolic warfare, were the *doctrines* of the *two great Reformers*, as you called them? Was that '*begging the question*,' either fair or manly? Has not a *Mufti* of Mahomet, just as good a right to *assume* the point, that those weapons are the doctrines of that 'great Apostle and Prophet of God,' as he would term him? Certainly. And has not a Catholic priest quite as much authority for presuming that the Popes of the Holy See have received the weapons of the spiritual warfare, in regular succession from St. Peter, &

whom greater things were said, than even of Paul himself? and from whom Paul, no less than the Popes, received his commission to 'fight the good fight of faith'? No man of reading and information, can deny the fact. And it is written in history, in characters of blood and fire, that the Calvinistic doctrine has led its votaries, in all countries where they had the means, to persecute, kill, and burn *heretics*, with as little mercy and to as great an extent, according to their numbers and power, as ever the Catholics did. Deny this, Sir, you dare not, and appeal to history for the facts! I invite you to the contest, in a work on that 'carnal' point!!

2. Do you reply, by saying, that you did not mention the name of Calvin, but barely that of Luther? Answer; that is only making a bad matter worse. It shows in the first place, that you were ashamed of the author of your system; and in the next, that you meant to deceive your hearers, by professing one doctrine and preaching another. You had not half as much reason to be ashamed of the Champion of the Reformation, as he would have to be ashamed of you, for stealing the livery of the founder of Calvinism, to fight the battles of *Arminius* in. But had the ghost of Calvin been present, it would have convulsed with rage, and chattered its unearthly teeth in vengeance, when you mentioned the *name* of Luther, that 'rascal! dog!' as he was wont to call him, at the neglect of his own. Luther, as every body knows, remained the nearest to Popery, and re-

tained in *obvious terms*, the most of its abominations, of any of the reformers—Calvin, Melancthon, Zuinglius, &c. This evinces, either that you were not honest, or that you are conscious of having receded from pure Calvinism, back towards old Popery!

But why do you rail against *Popery*? If you will name one absurd dogma in the whole creed, for which I cannot find an *equivalent* in your system, I promise before God and the world, never again to open my lips or move a pen in opposition to Calvinism! The blood and sufferings of *Servetus*, the Waldenses, the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, the Victims of our ‘Puritan fore-fathers,’ the Baptists, Quakers, &c. will cry aloud from the earth, and declare that you (Calvinists) hold openly, that *murderers* and *persecutors* will go to heaven! Yes Sir, you openly assert the doctrine of *indulgences*, by admitting in your creed and publicly confessing in prayer, that *all the members* of churches, sin daily as long as they are on earth,—and still go to heaven without a perfect change this side the grave; and you say there is no change afterward. Deny this you cannot. See Dr. Spring’s ‘Vademecum,’ in which it is avowed without a blush, that the best *saints* on earth, ‘*sin daily*, frequently, knowingly, wilfully, greatly and foully.’—Is not this *indulgence* enough? Your whole order oppose the doctrine of absolute *sinless* perfection in this world.

Dr. Porter maintains, on the subject of *Revisions*, that *Converts* to Calvinism cannot fix on the

time of their conversion. One was *changed* over *four years* before he found it out, or thought of any such thing. The difference of feeling and conduct could not be very great, or he would have sooner mistrusted something of the kind. Baxter, Backus, G. H. Cowles, and others, thought *conversion* was wholly of God, and *instantaneous*; but that the *time* was *imperceptible*, and the *moral pollution* appeared *greater, after the change*, than before. The subjects of such revivals enjoy a *hope* of being saved, without first *hoping* they have met with a change of heart! Is not this, according to your notions, *indulgence* with a witness? If gospel grace were not free and sovereign, says the Doctor, there could be no hope for such sinners.

President Edwards, in speaking of the great *revival* of his day, which was produced by preaching the *five points* of real Calvinism, says, it did not so much as come into the minds of converts that they were changed, at the *time* of conversion. They had a still *deeper sense* of their *guilt* and *ruin* as sinners, than before. Their salvation was wholly of God. He compares sinners to a man in a dark place, who would perceive his danger gradually, as light was let in upon him. How much light then, must these sinners have received, who did not mistrust the change of condition, till *years* after it took place? Dr. Porter mentions another divine, 'A. Hooper,' who says that conversions are not easily produced, but cost great labor, as *converts* have *to contend with the plague* of their own hearts.'

&c. And yet, after the great work is wrought, the sinful *plague* is not so removed, as to enable the convert to know it, or *mistrust* it for a long time. Finally, Dr. Hopkins says that the *saints* commit *worse crimes than sinners!* Calvinists do not, it is true, profess to ‘pray people out of purgatory;’ but you profess to believe that your prayers will save them from a place infinitely worse; and you are *paid for your prayers by the year*, as much as Catholics are by the *job!* You do not *pray* to ‘the Virgin Mary,’ *to pray* for you before the throne of God; but you *do* encourage others, whether virgins or not, to *pray to you to offer prayers for them*, that your God would save them from *his own wrath*; as much hotter than purgatory, as Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace was hotter than moon-shine! You repair to the dying pillow of a wretch, whose life has been an unbroken chapter of rapine and cruelty, and by *prayer*, pretend to call down a saving *unction*, by which his heart is changed and sins forgiven; so that he agonizes and struggles from earth’s gloom to heaven’s glory. And, not unfrequently, the *triumph* of such weapons is declared, in having gone from the prison to the gallows of a murderer, whose hands were wreaking with gore, and by a momentary change of heart, given him a passport from blood to blessedness! Clear your system, friend Chickering, of these abominations, before you again boast of reformation from Popery. Calvin’s reformation was like a thunder-storm, in the midst of gloomy midnight!

3. If you profess the doctrine of reformers,

why did you, not only cautiously evade the name of Calvin, but also, avoid stating each of the ‘five points’ and almost every thing else which pertains to that doctrine? The necessity of repentance and faith, the trinity, and endless misery are not *peculiar* to Calvinism. So far from coming out like a man, in favor of Calvin’s system, you taught a *universal atonement* and *conditional salvation*, treading under foot ‘*particular* election and divine predestination.’ I will give a fair price for the copy of your discourse, Sir, that I may publish it, and show Dr. GRIFFIN and the world, that in order to work on the passions by *tricks* and *slangs*, you abandoned the leading doctrines of Calvin, Watts, Edwards, Brainerd, Woods, Stuart, and every other author of talents and notoriety in the Calvinistic communion.

The sermon from Isaiah xlv. 9, ‘*Wo to him that striveth with his Maker,*’ was too entirely unconnected with the language of the prophet, to deserve a serious review. Not to give offence, however, and to lead you into the the suburbs of correct sermonizing, I will offer a few remarks. Let any person of any denomination, candidly read the chapter from which the *text* was selected, and if it is not allowed to teach the doctrine of Divine sovereignty, in as point blank terms as any in the Old Testament, I will acknowledge I have overrated the intelligence and candor of the people. Please read it yourself, Sir, and correct me publicly and severely, if I am wrong. You know I am *right*, and will not deny it. Well, what attention did you pay to the context? Not

a moment's. You commenced a regular *strife* with the very spirit of your subject. In addressing Cyrus, of whom it is said, ‘He is my Shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure,’ God declares what *He will do*; what *shall be done*, and says, ‘I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and *create evil*: *I the Lord do all these things*, &c. Wo to him that *striveth* with his Maker. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? Or thy work, He hath no hands? Wo to him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? Or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the **LORD**, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker,’ &c. It is not to be presumed, Sir, but that if you had read the *context*, ev~~ery~~ venerable matron and time-honored maiden in that congregation, would have seen, at once, that it proclaimed the sovereignty of God, as divines call it, in unambiguous terms. And it would have been difficult for you to kick up such a dust about ‘God’s controversy with Zion,’ as to have smothered that fact. But regardless of the ‘wo’ in the text, you commenced a formal ‘strife’ with our Maker; and not only admitted he was dissatisfied with his own works, but that ‘He had no hands’ mighty enough to restore its desolations. And you were not single-handed in the strife.

The eloquent Mr. Rogers had publicly maintained, that the most valuable part of God’s works, even that which ‘He fashioned of clay,’—was bad, naturally bad, and totally depraved, as it

came fresh from the hands of its Maker. And the lion-hearted Mr. Albro continued the strife, in terms hardly compatible with the usages of decorous controversy. He not only threw his infinite antagonist into the back ground, by coolly representing him as getting *really angry*, every day, with his own works, and repenting of what *he had done himself in making man* on the earth, but, also, as having his heart stung with grief, at the recollection of such indiscretions ! And indeed, if his opponent did *really repent* at all, it must have been for his *own errors*, as one being cannot repent for another, even if he would. Having got this advantage in the controversy, Mr. Albro grew quite bold and boisterous, and called some of the Maker's works which were present, sinful fools, as well as natural villains ! And it must be confessed there were some in the audience who were not *wise* enough, to discover, that he had offered any insult to themselves or their Maker. He said repeatedly,—‘Why, the foolish prodigal *wan't* such a *fool* as sinners are. Fool as he was, he didn't refuse to arise and go to his father, after he came to himself. He *wan't* such a *fool* as to think he hadn't *ability* to go, or it was best to remain with the swine, and live on their fare a little longer. But *awakened sinners are such fools* they don't say, ‘I will arise,’ but think they can't, or hadn't best be in a hurry,’ &c. And now, Sir, I am sorry to find you in the field, with an armor on, as dazzling as the war-dress of Goliath, protracting the strife with our

Maker to a painful prolixity. You represented the Almighty as having been frequently worsted in controversy with sinners, and that the only way in which He could hope to overcome, was, to drop the war of words, and resort to a fisticuff engagement, and by one furious blow, knock sinners down to the prison-house of despair, and commit them to the safe keeping of their father, the devil ! This, you know, is a sober statement of facts, in short metre ; and for its truth I hold myself responsible before any tribunal in the universe. The *words* are mostly *mine* ; the real *meaning*, wholly *yours*. And I close by saying, that there is not a text in the Bible which favors your notions of God's controversies ; nor one which says a syllable about carrying the strife into the resurrection world !

Your Sermon at the South Village, embraced some important *news* from *heaven*, which ought to be proclaimed on the house-tops. Such 'light' cannot be hid under a bushel. The *news* is no less important for being revealed in a school-house ! I shall keep as sober as I possible can in the relation of facts, because the poet says,

'*Laugh when we must, be sober when we can,  
But vindicate the ways of God to man.*'

You will forgive me, however, if I am a little musical, now and then, provided I keep *cool* ; because brother Albro said in his first sermon at our late meeting, that God himself would not only get horribly angry with us, poor creatures, but that in the hottest of his wrath, He would laugh

also at our *endless* calamities, and *mock*, too, at our very fears! And if, on hearing such sublime discourses, a person should happen to be *excited* with the theme, and *smile*, is it not hard to be talked about, as making light of the sermon? Certainly. If God *laughs*, may I not *smile*? I say this seriously and reverentially. That *man must be indevout*, who does not imitate God, even to shed tears, *if* his *Maker* was so grieved at heart, as to weep! But blessed be his name forever! ‘God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that *He should repent*. Hath He said it, and shall *He* not do it; hath He spoken it, and shall *He not make it good*?

1. The first point, in the lecture on Luke xv. 10, ‘*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth*,’ which requires, attention, related to repentance. Thus,

‘*Repentance*, or deep sorrow for sin, will not ensure pardon from God. The law of God which makes the *penalty* of every sin endless punishment, must have its full demands. The law has been violated, and the penalty must be executed on the transgressor, or every sinner in the universe would laugh at the Lawgiver. If the sinner could violate the law, and then escape the penalty by repenting, being sorry or reforming, it would be a mockery of justice; and in fact, the law would offer a *bounty* on crimes. It would be offering the protection of violated laws to the guilty, on account of his bare repentance. What *would* be thought of an earthly government that *should forgive* thieves, robbers, and murderers,

and let them go unpunished, because they were sorry for what they had done? Why, all the subjects would laugh at its threatenings, and go on and sin with impunity; only taking care to repent in season to escape the *penalty*. A king who should threaten murderers with death, and not execute the law, would deserve the contempt of the whole realm. It is recorded in history, that a certain king made a law that if any of his subjects committed a certain crime, he should have *both of his eyes put out!* Well, in a short time, the good king was informed that his law had been violated; and the culprit was forthwith brought before him. And who, my friends, do you think it was? Why, it was the *king's own son!* Well, the penalty of the law must be executed to the very letter, or others would have excuse for committing the same crime. The honor of the judge, must not yield to the compassion of the father. Well, what could be done? Why, my hearers, it is a tradition of history, whether true or not I do not say, nor does it make any difference,—but it is a tradition, that the king resolved upon this expedient, that to keep his word and the law inviolate, he would put out *one of his son's eyes and one of his own!* And he executed the penalty of the law in that way, saving *three quarters* of the punishment from his son, by suffering the loss of one of his own eyes. And the people of his realm were quite as well satisfied as though he had executed the whole penalty on his guilty son. [No wonder thought I; for if they

had known their own rights, they would have been still better satisfied, if that cruel monster, who made such a *law*, had lost both his own eyes to begin with, and had it written, ‘like the laws of Draco, in blood,’ and tears.] But you continued to say—‘ Though I don’t pretend that the cases are exactly parallel, still, this is a very good illustration of the manner in which God executes the penalty of his holy law on transgressors, and yet freely forgives penitent sinners ! They are forgiven, on account of the satisfaction which the Second Person in the Holy Trinity made to divine justice, by suffering for them the *whole penalty* of God’s violated laws ; so that God can be just and yet forgive penitent sinners who believe in Jesus.’

CHRIST suffer the *penalty* of law ! And that penalty, mind ye, eternal death ! the endless pains of hell !! eternal exclusion from God and heaven !!! Confusion worse confounded ! And yet, Sir, you looked quite serious while relating the whole affair. I had heard and seen the same arrant nonsense, before ; but little did I think there was a man of good sense in the whole army of Protestants, who had self-control enough to repeat it, without a blush or a smile.

But to suppose that common people of common sense cannot unravel such a net of priestcraft and detect its impositions, is to admit them spell-bound with fear and superstition. If my two sons, who were present at the Lecture, about twelve years of age, had not been able to expose the contradictions and inconsistencies of the argument,

I should not consider it safe to trust them off half a mile by moon-shine, without a servant lad of better talents, to guide and protect them. But I am told by Mr. Brown's friends that he was so taken up with the illustration, that he enlarged upon it greatly, the next sabbath evening! Allow me to add,—If a chapter can be found in the *Koran*, or a paragraph of legends concerning *purgatory*, or a story of Swedenborg's visits to heaven and hell, more replete with absurdity, contradiction and downright flummery, I not only promise to sacrifice my small possessions, but also my liberty for life. I will not except Swedenborg's story of seeing 'JOHN CALVIN in hell, at first rather melancholy, then revelling in the society of harlots, but finally committed to prison with his followers; and put to hard labor,' probably, to work at the *forge*, making chains and handcuffs for his disciples, lest he should be at his old tricks again, and get up a revival and rebellion in the prison beneath.

My dear Sir, what shall we think of the man who pretends, that a *law*, which requires both the *eyes* of a *rebel*, is honored by destroying *one eye* of an *innocent* person? You undertook to make out, that the *penalty* of the law must be executed on the *very culprit*, or the sovereign would be laughed to scorn; and yet presented a case, in which *half* the letter, and, by your own showing, *three fourths* of the spirit of the law, were evaded! and a cruel king, who issued such a merciless law, instead of showing any favor from prin-

ciple, made a virtue of necessity, and took to himself, the fruits of his own fool-hardiness. And you would have us believe that this king is a fit similitude of the great and good Author of human existence ! Would it have been strange, if, after speaking thus of your Maker, you had exclaimed, ‘ wo is me ! ’ and began ‘ to feel round for some one to lead’ you. (Acts xiii. 10, 11.) There was not the shadow of parallel in the two cases, unless you meant to imply, that God suffered in the death of his Son, equal to the loss of one of his eyes ! Which is blasphemy.

But suppose Christ did suffer the *penalty* of the law of *sinners*. Can any mortal be so blind as not to discover, that it ruins your story ? For, in that case, the *penalty* would not fall on the guilty ; but, on the innocent Jesus ! And the sinner has only to repent and believe in such cruelty, and he is excused from all deserved punishment. Is not this offering the very ‘bounty on crime,’ which you mentioned ? Your representation is like this. A father has ten sons, and all excepting *one*, violate his law and deserve to suffer its *penalty*, which is, to have all their *eyes* put *out*. And to execute the law ‘to the very letter,’ the *father*, (pardon the profanation of the name,) concludes to put out the eyes of his innocent son, by such a lingering process, that he would suffer just as great a *quantum* of misery, as all the guilty sons would, providing the *threat* had been executed *on them*, individually ! And this, you call *just and merciful* ! If God gratified his vengeance in

the death of Jesus, and satisfied his stern justice, as much as though all mankind had been damned eternally, did He manifest any *mercy*? Nay, did He not, (forgive my pursuing the argument, O Most Gracious,) *satisfy* his *cruelty*, also, by causing the same amount of misery, and violate the very letter and spirit of his own law, by inflicting that misery on the innocent, instead of the guilty? No man of discernment can deny it. Such is the result of your comparison and reasoning. It is the same as though good old Jacob had been so angry with his wicked sons, who sold Joseph into Egypt, as to inflict all the punishment which they deserved, on that innocent son, and then boast of his mercy and justice! and pretend he had executed the threats of his law, on the guilty!! Would not this course 'offer a bounty on crime,' and wield a bludgeon at innocence? You will not deny it, Sir, in black and white. To finish the whole, you told sinners, that as 'the second person in the Holy Trinity had suffered the punishment they deserved, and *satisfied* the demands of justice, all they had to do, was, to repeat and believe, and all heaven was theirs.' That there was more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety and nine just persons, who needed no repentance. Having silenced the lips of justice by satisfying its demands, you offered a bounty, by a bad use of scripture words, of ninety-nine to one, in favor of sin; for if there was misery, there would be no need of repentance! I am too charitable to think *you* believe such a system.

The only way by which you can avoid such absurdities and not offer a bounty on sin, is to abandon your old crazy system of *substitution*, and *satisfaction* to justice, and adopt the Scripture theory, that 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.' 'Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' 'That He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' 'Christ died for the ungodly.' 'And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' 'But *he* that doeth wrong *shall receive* for the wrong he hath done, and there is no respect of persons with God.' 'He shall reward every man according to his works.' Adopt these views, and all is clear and harmonious. Not a word is said about God's threatenings, Christ's substitution, or suffering the punishment due to sinners. Not a word about Christ's *making* an atonement, *making* a propitiation for sin, *purchasing* a ransom or clearing the guilty from their just deserts. Christ was the *propitiation*, the *ransom* the *atonement* for sin, in the same sense that He was.

'the mediator' and 'advocate.' That is, He was the mercy-seat or medium, in his official character and ministry, by which the unpurchased and boundless love of God, was commended or recommended to a sinful world, for their reconciliation and salvation from sin and unholiness. All who receive the atonement, or reconciliation, which is a better translation of the original word, (*kattelagen*) are saved from deserving punishment, and joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The marvellous *news* which you revealed concerning angels and glorified spirits, was quite amusing and interesting. You said that, 'both angels and godly parents in heaven, had great compassion for sinners, and their hearts were pained, when they perceived their unwillingness to repent and be saved.' And as you are blessed with a good share of *mother-wit*, you relate an anecdote in much better airs, than one of my clumsy mould can repeat it on paper. Due allowance must therefore be made, while I repeat after you. You said,

'I knew a pious man about 70 years ago, who had a very wicked, intemperate son. And when the father was on his dying bed, his son disturbed the peace of his expiring moments with insolence and profanity, till he was obliged to expel him from his presence : saying, 'My son, you disturb the quiet of my dying pillow, with your profanity and intoxication,—you must leave the room!' But as the son went out, the father added, 'I

will *pray* for you as long as I have breath. Well, the good old man died, and, as we have reason to believe, went to heaven! And now, my hearers, do you think he lost all compassion for his debauched son? By no means. His heart was *pained*, whenever he thought of the son he had left in his sins on earth! Well, suppose *five years* had passed away, and the *anxious father* should meet a host of angels coming from earth to heaven; to report concerning the success of *revivals*! Would he not inquire,—‘Well, what *news* from the world below?’ And they answer, ‘Bad news for you! your son is as wicked as ever!’ Oh! how must that father feel? Well, *ten years* or more roll away, and the father meets another troop of angels, and makes a similar inquiry, and receives the same answer! Must not his heart be *pained*, if he had any compassion for his son? Well, as report says, at the end of *fifty years*, there was a *revival* of religion in the place, and that ungodly son was among the hopeful subjects of its influence. He was converted, broke off his vicious habits, dashed from his lips the intoxicating cup, and resolved to go to heaven. Now, my friends, suppose that at the end of the fifty years, that father was walking along on the battlements of heaven, and discovered another host of angels ascending with fresh *news* from earth. Would he not anxiously inquire, ‘Well, what is the *news* now? and they answer, ‘O good, good news! your son has experienced religion—he is converted.’ O my

hearers, would not that joyful father join the angelic host, and go back to the throne of God, singing and shouting, ‘Glory to God ! my debauched son is converted ! he will be saved ?’ Yes ; and the holy angels would strike a new note of praise, and shout, too in louder and louder strains of joy, that another sinner had repented and experienced regenerating grace.’

Well done, said I,—that is a good story, and very well told. I hope it is substantially true; for if it is, the abominable doctrine which has been taught for ages, that parents would be destitute of all human compassion in heaven, and rejoice over the sufferings of their own children in hell, is a mere fiction, just as I always thought it was !

I am really thankful to you, Sir, for opposing that barbarous notion, before Mr. Brown’s hearers. They would have thought it perfectly ridiculous, in *me*; and said that I told *stories* and anecdotes in preaching, because I was destitute of scripture proofs. That I contradicted myself, by saying, that saints and angels would be anxiously pained at heart, in the midst of perfect felicity in heaven ! They would have inquired, what sort of a *heaven* it would be, for parents to be so concerned and uneasy about their unconverted children, as to wander off from the throne of God, and loiter about on the battlements of the kingdom, waiting for troops of angels to return from missions, to bring tidings from the world below ? Indeed, Mr. Brown’s friends would laugh at the

notion, that God himself, *who carries on all the revivals in person*, should need to send missionaries from heaven, to collect the *news* of the day, and chase back and forth as the gazetteers of the skies! They would argue, that, if the bare *exposure* of a child to endless wo, would produce pain in heaven, his final doom would plunge the poisoned spear into their bosoms, to fester into the gangrene of incurable grief! And their conclusions would be plausible, to say the least.

Remarks on your last sermon, from John iii. 16, will be incorporated with my letter to Mr. Brown.

Friend Chickering, when you promised to your audience at the South Village, that in speaking of the ‘unknown worlds,’ you could not be limited to real facts, but must be allowed to fill up the great outlines of the picture which God has drawn in the Bible, with the paintings of imagination; and that it was *probable* that when people arrived at either place, heaven or hell, they would find the reality very different from the representation, I thought you meant to speak with some precaution. But when you went on, so fluently, to reveal the *news*, and describe the minute circumstances of heaven, you reminded me of the following anecdote, to which, I was knowing.

At a term of the Supreme Court of Vermont, holden at Newfane, about fifteen years ago, a *Baptist* minister, by the name of ELLIOTT, was *called* upon the stand, as a witness, who was

justly celebrated for his ease and fluency in preaching. But when he gave testimony *under oath*, and was *limited to facts*, ‘the truth and nothing but the truth,’ he was extremely embarrassed. A good natured ‘limb of the law,’ who had heard much of Mr. E’s fluency, asked a brother lawyer, in an under voice, why he was so embarrassed and confused, in giving his testimony before the court? ‘Why,’ answered his friend, involuntarily raising his *voice* with his head, ‘the reverend gentleman is *confined to facts*, now! he is *limited to facts*, Sir.’ My queries in regard to *you*, were, how the Rev. Gentleman would succeed in preaching about ‘unknown worlds,’ if confined to facts? If this little anecdote should lead you to consider, that *facts* are preferable to fictions, and scripture truths worth more than senseless theories, one object, Sir, in relating it, will be unexpectedly answered, by

Yours very affectionately,

R. STREETER.

Shirley Village, 20th October, 1832.

## LETTER VII.

*To Rev. John Todd,*

CALVINIST MINISTER OF GROTON,\* MASS.

The perfect knowledge of God—Drs. Beecher and Wood—Election—Man's destiny and ability—No impossibility required—A host of sinners passing through heaven, &c.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

I listened to your discourse of the 4th instant, with unbroken attention, and will now claim the indulgence of remarking on that brief storm of eloquence. I shall ‘neither extenuate, nor set down aught in malice;’ and it is hoped your regard for my eternal welfare, will incline you to hear me with candor, and follow my labors with prompt corrections, should I mistake or misstate your meaning. My design is, to speak the truth, in love and faithfulness. You began :

‘*God is in a habit*, so to speak, of sending his creatures on various errands, for the execution of his own pleasure.—He commands angels in heaven to go—and they obey him, &c.

‘*God is in a habit* of commanding all men, Jews and Gentiles, the learned and unlearned, to yield him obedience, etc. And now I wish to ask you one plain question, viz. (pointing your

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\* Now, of NORTHAMPTON.

finger high towards the cloud,) What right has God to command you to obey him? What *right* has He? (a *pause*.) My hearers, who made you? Did you *create* yourselves? Why then did you not make yourself an angel, or a being of superior talents? Why a frail, sinful worm of the dust? But you know that God made you, such as you are! And has not your Maker a *right* to require your services? Certainly.

'Who preserves you? Do you preserve yourselves? Why then don't you retain the bloom of youth, and the vigor of health? Why do you grow old and infirm, and sicken, and die? But God preserves you; and therefore you owe him your best services and constant obedience.

'Whose farm is that? and whose buildings are those? (pointing your finger.) Are they *yours*, or has God *lent* them to you? If they are yours, what right has God to destroy your crops with hail storms or drought? or to send his lightning and burn up your buildings? Has God any right to destroy what does not belong to him? or burn up property that is not his own? Surely not. It is all his, and you are borrowers. God has a right to do as he will with his own property. He is your Creator, Preserver and Governor, and you owe him entire and perpetual obedience. God asks no more than what is his right and that He will have. He demands the supreme homage and love of all hearts. And why should he not, since all you possess and all you are belong to God.

as his property, which he will dispose of as he pleases.'

You will not complain, Sir, that I have done you injustice in this *abridgement* of your argument. Let us then analyze it, and ascertain its constituents parts. 1. You learn that God has a right to require the obedience of all men, because He made all, and preserves and blesses all ! Granted. 2. You ascertain that Deity made us subject to sickness, the decay of age, and to death itself, from the fact that these events come upon all, in the order of His providence. No theory, however plausible, could convince a man of your talents, that God made all men with the design of having them forever retain the freshness of youth and the bloom of health, since *the facts* of the case announce the contrary. Even an unlettered child can discover, that if God intended anything different in regard to man's health and longevity, from what actually takes place under his government, He must be disappointed ; and being possessed of *infinite* attributes, His disappointment must be *infinite* ! Very well ; we agree finely. 3. When a tempest or tornado destroys our crops, or the lightnings consume our buildings, you know it was God who did it, as no other being could command or send those judgments. If the Almighty had not intended those events, He would have held the tempest-cloud in the hollow of his hand, and caused the forked lightnings to play in harmless splendour through *the heavens*. He has a special design in every

measure of his government. To deny this, is practical *atheism*.

4. It follows of course, that God had a definite purpose in giving existence to every rational soul; and that purpose will be perfected. In other words; the *ultimate destiny* of every being will be *precisely* what the Creator *intended*; and what he *knew* it would be. For instance: the Creator *designed* to make a being exactly like my humble *self*; and He *knew* from ancient times, that the being spoken of, would be born in Chesterfield, N. H. on the 15th of April, A. D. 1791. Now, Sir, what should we think of the man, who, in the face of such a *fact*, should contend that the same being might have been introduced upon earth, at some *other place and time*? say; at St. Petersburg, in Russia, a thousand years hence? Why, we must conclude he was either a madman, a novice, or a wilful bigot. No decree can add any certainty to an event, which is the subject of certain knowledge. Let it be further granted, then, that God *knew* my final destiny would be misery without end! Very well; be it so. But I wish to ask you, friend Todd, whether there has been a time since God *first knew* I should certainly go to your hell, 'so to speak,' that it was possible for me to be saved and go to heaven? No man of good sense will risk his reputation upon such an argument. It would be the climax of absurdity. Hence, you will admit that, 'to speak after the manner of men,' there is no danger of my being saved, on the above *supposition*! And, for Deity to use any means, with

the pretension of meaning to rescue me from my *final destiny*, would only be the addition of insult to injury.

Again. Suppose the Almighty Creator knew that a rational being by the name of JOHN TODD, would be ushered into existence about the same time that I was, perhaps a little after, and that being soundly orthodox; in his own estimation, he would certainly be saved from the hell to which he never was exposed, and leap, at death, from the sandbank of mortality to the sunny highlands of paradise. This *fact* was embraced in the fix-edness of knowledge. Has there ever been a moment, then, since the fact was known to God, that the aforesigned JOHN TODD could change his own unalterable destiny and land on the fire-bound headlands of endless damnation? Have you any agency by which you can disappoint Deity, change facts to fictions, fate to falsehood, and infinite knowledge into indefinite foolishness? And the same consequences will follow, according to your own showing, when applied to any other being or thing in the universe. The same unerring wisdom which marked out the flaming course of the comet, gave directions also, by the eternal laws of nature, to the sinuous flight of the sparks which stream from a glowing furnace. The wings of a cherub and the wings of a sparrow, are alike under the control of Deity. The destiny of every created being in the universe of God, must have *been* settled in the councils of the Creative Mind *eternal ages* before we existed on earth. To say

the result will be different from what was contemplated with the certainty of knowledge, is foolishly to charge God with folly; but to maintain that a being whose *final destiny* was forged and finished on the anvil of eternal wisdom, can alter it, 'for better or for worse,' (as Mr. Rogers says,) would be equally absurd and blasphemous. It destroys the very foundation of Calvinism, as stated and defended, so far as the Divine purpose is concerned, by every author of notoriety on both continents. Hear your own Doct. LYMAN BEECHER, in a sermon of his reprinted under his revising eye, at Boston, in 1827, from the text, '*Thy kingdom come.*' He says:

'It is desirable that God should govern the world, and *dispose* of *all events*, because he knows perfectly how the world should be governed. He only, knows how so to order things that the existence of *every being*, and *every event*, **SHALL ANSWER THE PURPOSE OF ITS CREATION**, from the rolling of a world to the fall of a sparrow. In Him, the knowledge which discovered the *end*, discovered also with unerring wisdom, the most appropriate *means to bring it to pass*. The whole universe is a store-house of means, and when God speaks, *every intelligence* and *every atom* flies to execute his pleasure.' Can you object to these orthodox and immutable truths? Are they not the same in *principle*, with those advanced by yourself, Sir? Then hear the final result, so far as man's *destiny* is concerned!—  
'God's eternal *decrees*, of which so many are

afraid, are nothing but the *plan*; He has devised to express his benevolence and make his *kingdom as vast* and as blessed, as his own infinite goodness desires. He will bring JUST AS MANY obstinate rebels to abandon their prison, and enter cheerfully his kingdom, as infinite wisdom, goodness and mercy DESIRES. God will not MAR the happiness of his kingdom by bringing in TOO MANY, nor by SHUTTING OUT TOO MANY. His redeemed kingdom, as to the NUMBER and PERSONS who compose it, will be such as shall be wholly satisfactory to God, and to every subject of his kindgom. God will cause the punishment of the wicked to illustrate his glory, and thus indirectly PROMOTE the HAPPINESS of HEAVEN !!.\*—*Beecher's Sermon.* pp. 4, 5.

Here, Sir, is an exhibition of your own views

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\* This doctrine may appear startling to some, who barely assent to the notion of endless torment. But a moment's consideration will convince them that it is the only plausible reason which can be assigned for the perpetuity of punishment. If the sufferings of an endless hell, do not enhance the happiness of heaven; they must be useless as well as cruel. They can neither benefit the Lord, the devil, nor the damned. The only use of ceaseless torture, therefore, must be, to increase the joys of heaven! So thought Edwards, Strong, Spaulding, Emmons, and a host of others. The former says,

"The sight of hell-torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. It will really make their happiness the greater; it will give them a more lively relish of it; it will make them prize it more. When they see others, of the same nature, and born under the same circumstances, plunged into such misery, and they so distinguished, O it will make them sensible how happy they are! A sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure." This is honest and fair. Because, the saints must either view the damned with indifference, pain, or additional pleasure! The latter, of course, or the sight would be worse than useless.

of the subject, if you really believe in endless misery. As Dr. Emmons told me in conversation, ‘this is the only ground on which endless misery can be maintained with a shadow of propriety. The purpose of God must reach all events, and of course, the final condition of his offspring. God will bring just as many to his holy kingdom as he pleases—just that *number* and those *persons* which his infinite wisdom and mercy *desire*.’ This, Mr. Todd, is your system, and you cannot deny it in any tangible form. You believe as much as I do, that the Creator chained the latent cause to the most distant event, and made them both immutably fast in the fitness of things. And hence, if a greater number could be saved than God originally intended, it would destroy his supremacy and government, and not only *mar* the happiness of heaven, but in the whirl of ages, it might ‘gratify the wicked,’ as friend *Rogers* would say, ‘in hurling God himself from his throne!’ Look out then for the *homestead*.

Dr. Woods, of Andover, teaches the same doctrine, and yet, no sooner do his *theological boys* become of age, than they deny and ridicule the theory in which he drilled them for years. The Dr. says,

‘It is altogether unreasonable to object to the doctrine of the Catechism that ‘*God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass*;’ that is, that his purpose extends to *all events* in his administration. These remarks are as applicable to the

*purpose* of God, which is called *election*, as to any other. God must have *eternally designed* to do just what he *does* in the present life, and what he will do in the *judgment day*; that is, he must have *designed* to save that same *number* of *individuals* and *no more or less*. He must have *determined* to do it. Divine grace in the conversion of sinners is distinguishing; in other words of those who are *equally* unworthy of favor, and equally deserving of *punishment*, *some* are renewed and *others* are *not*. Divine grace actually makes a difference among those who are *equally sinful*, renewing some and not others.

That act of divine grace whsch so far as the *conduct* of sinners is concerned, is *wholly unconditional*, is the first formation of a holy character.' See Wood's Letters to Dr. Ware, pp. 154, 158.

No language could more clearly express the very sentiments which I have said, belong to your system. This is an honest avowal of the doctrine of Calvinism in its mildest forms, declared as in letters of sun-beams. Of what avail then, is all the modern whimpering about a *conditional salvation*, so far as the conduct of sinners is concerned? And what shall we think of the men, who profess the above doctrine, and yet pretend that God is *desirous* to save all men, and that the whole family of Adam might have been saved and made forever holy? Either they are insane, or they mean to deceive their hearers. Any man who has read beyond the *first chapter* of

old wives' fables,' must see that they contradict their own system in the most direct manner. And furthermore; for men who maintain the doctrine of fore-ordination, or absolute fore-knowledge, to talk of God's *anger*, and *repentance*, and *grief*, and *jealousy*, as though they were *real*, as the same passions are in men, is too ridiculous to be named, except as the second part of the tale of witch-stories and apparition revelations:

It is bad enough in men to conduct in such a manner as to be sorry and repent ; and quite too bad to be *jealous*, and get *angry*, especially with their own works ! And to suppose Deity is *really* jealous and angry while every thing in the universe is perfectly under His wise control, is monstrous in the extreme. The *figurative* language of scripture, upon these subjects, as some of your own authors have well observed, has reference only to the *appearance* of things in his administration, and not to the *real feelings* and thoughts of God. In the destruction of the old world, the doings of God *appeared* like those of a man, who repents or is disappointed, and destroys his own works with a vengeance. But God's thoughts are not really as our thoughts, nor his ways as ours. Those passages which speak of the *repentance*, *anger*, and *jealousy* of God, need only be interpreted so as to agree with others, in which His infinite perfection and immutability are taught, and all is harmonious and glorious !

We now come, Sir, to that part of your discourse, *in which you strenuously argued that 'no*

man was required to perform an impossibility ; in other words, that God had *no right* to demand of his creatures, the performance of an act, which they had not full ability to perform ! Agreed. But has man the ability to save himself contrary to the design or knowledge of his Maker ? Can he frustrate that part of the Divine plan, any more than he can retain the freshness and loveliness of youth forever, and refuse to grow old and die ? Or has God made it so certain that a man shall decay under the wasting hand of time, that he cannot avoid it ; and yet left it so uncertain whether he shall be finally saved or lost, that the result may be produced by the ability of the creature, contrary to the purpose and knowledge of his Creator ? Such gibberish you will not maintain. The consequence, then, is inevitable. It is simply this. Whatever *agency* man may possess, he cannot frustrate one *iota* of God's original design.\* His agency is an important part of that glorious plan, and must co-operate in the accomplishment of Jehovah's pleasure. And every sinner whom God intended to subdue and bring into his kingdom, will be converted and saved, exactly at the time and in the way, which He designed ; but every one whom He did *not* intend to save and make holy, will use his agency in such a manner, as to bring about the intended result. As said the late editor of the Boston Recorder, 'To speak of degrees of *di-*

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\* The writer is preparing a work for the press, in which *human agency* is defined and illustrated.

*vine influence*, is to represent the Deity as being finite and weak, like mortal men, who accomplish their purposes with difficulty and labor. It is always effectual when exerted. When God is pleased to exert his power, it is not difficult for Him to bring a Saul, a Mannasseh, or a gospel-hardened sinner, out of darkness into light, and make the stoutest heart submit! Away then with the flummery of declamation about the obstacles of man's agency! You will not hesitate to admit that *God has no right*,—to use your own words,—to require the salvation of a sinner whom He does not intend to save. It would be requiring an impossibility. Like binding him hand and foot, as you remarked, and chaining him to a rock, and then demanding of him to run and be free! Hence if any are finally lost, it will not be owing to their neglect of performing what God had a *right* to demand; but if the fault be theirs, it will consist in *not doing*, what He had *no right* to require, and they *no ability* to perform? But who would not blush to avow such monstrous absurdities? If I had not resolved to treat these subjects with great delicacy, I should use severer terms:

I was much diverted, Sir, when you conveyed the innumerable host of liars, thieves, robbers, murderers, &c. to the world of glory and *beyond it*. Something like the following:—

'What do sinners want to go to heaven *for*? It is foolish to wish to go, unless they know what *it is for*! They cannot carry their farms, work-

shops, nor merchandize ; and if they could, there would be no use for them in heaven. They don't wish to go there to associate with God, or Christ, or angels and saints ; for they could not bear their company on earth. Neither could the host of the redeemed, who have come out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, consent to mingle with the more numerous company of the ungodly, who have scoffed at religion and wallowed in the filth and mire of debauchery and crime. If two cannot walk together on earth, unless they are agreed, how much less could they in heaven ? But suppose the wicked are allowed to go to the world of glory ! Come, let the abominable army of the wicked—infidels, liars, thieves, robbers, drunkards, murderers and all, ascend in company ! Unfold your pearly gates on golden hinges, ye glorious heavens, and let them enter ! There ! there ! they go ! they ascend—they enter the world of glory ! The celestial hosts divide to the right and left ! But for what ? to welcome them to the regions of light and the society of the redeemed ? No ! but to let them *pass through* to some dark corner of God's universe, and *hide themselves* in guilt and despair ! Quite accommodating, thought I ; and looking around me, I perceived the countenances of the would-be-saints were lighting up with something like a smile. They appeared to be quite pleased that 'the saints triumphant' had escaped, though narrowly, the pollutions of sinners ; and that the dear creatures whom they and

their God are so *anxious* to save, were not detained at all, in heaven, but allowed to continue the rapidity of their flight, till they reached the ‘dark corner,’ on the other side of the kingdom ! My first impression, was, that my fellow-christians were rather hard-hearted in smiling that poor sinners had sped their way through the broad empire of God above, and landed afar off, on the dark nook of despair. But a second thought corrected the error. They probably remembered the *reverend* sayings of Mr. Albro and others, that ‘heaven’ would be the *worst place*, ‘the direct and hottest hell in the *universe for sinners!*’ Of course, they exercised ‘*disinterested benevolence*’ in rejoicing that they were not arrested in their career by a phalanx of saints and angels, and compelled to remain in that fire of sevenfold vengeance ! But you, brother Todd, hoisted the wretches upward and onward, and the celestial hosts let them pass through, for the same reason that Dr. Beecher said, ‘God would shut them out of heaven,’ viz. lest, by ‘saving *too many*, it would *mar* the joys of the place !’ Saints of your communion, do not wish to be overrun with company. They have no notion of condescending, like the despised Nazarene, to eat and drink with publicans and sinners. They associate with the *elect party*, only. Those who are, to be sure, when they *pray*, ‘poor, blind, miserable sinners ;’ but in a moment afterward, renewed saints, and gems of the first water.

Do you complain, Sir, that I make light of

your aerial exhibition? That may be;—but do I make the subject *lighter* than it was originally? Was it not a ‘mere trick’—a high, but ‘*barbarous cant*’—‘light as a puff of empty air.’ I could not but suspect you were laughing in your sleeve, when you stretched your giant arms to the clouds,—threw open the doors of paradise, escorted your drunken libertine hosts to heaven, with a bold theatrical flourish, drove them through a boundless kingdom to the remote corner of another infinity, and then came bouncing down upon earth, like a second Jupiter, with a fist full of red-hot thunderbolts to frighten a credulous multitude of young people! No doubt there were some present, who thought the *demons* had come down in the likeness of men; and said, as did the *Musti* concerning God; ‘Infinities are to him as the numerals of arithmetic to the sons of Adam. The thunderings of Hermon are the whisperings of his voice; the rustling of his attire causeth lightnings and earthquakes; and with the shadow of his garment he blotteth out the sun! He causes unbelievers to wander amid the whirlwind of error, and suits their souls to future torment. His justice refreshes the faithful, while damned spirits confess it in *despair*.’

But for myself, Sir, I hardly know what to make of you, as you were collecting your scattered limbs, and making preparations for another assault on the passions of the audience. That you were a son of lightning instead of thunder, was evident from the coruscations of fire and brimstone which came blazing from your lips,—more

terrific than broad rivers of boiling lava. As yours is emphatically the eloquence of wrath, I expected you would next surprise the timid with a volcanic eruption from the nether hell. But in that, you entirely failed ! You had represented *heaven* as being so much worse than the old-fashioned hell, that what you said in reference to the latter place, came like the pattering of small hailstones after a storm of bellowing thunders. All the *anxious* souls were as still and quiet as a young brood, when protected by pinions of safety. That you are a wonderful man, is cheerfully conceded. You create imaginary worlds with the movement of the lips ; you smite them, and they dissolve in smoke. You command, and the miseries of the *damned* are suspended ; they are transported in a balloon to heaven, while saints in fluttering robes of cherub-whiteness, divide in stately columns to let them pass to some dark corner of the universe, where you hide myriads in despair beneath the sole of your foot ! without dropping a tear over their embryo miseries, or tempering their fate in the soft fountain of pity ! As though standing astride the ocean, with one foot on the Andes and the other on the Atlas, you gaze with eyes of tearless melancholy ; unable either to weep or to exult at the damning prospect outspread before you. Can you not say with SAURIN, ‘I sink, I sink, under the awful weight of my subject ;—and I declare, when I see my relations, my friends, the people of my charge, *this whole congregation* ; when I think

that I, that you, that *we are all threatened* with these torments ; when I see—the least evidence, though it be only presumptive of my future misery, yet I find in the thought a *mortal poison*, which diffuses itself into every period of my life, rendering society tiresome, nourishment insipid, pleasure disgusting, and *life itself a cruel bitter*. I cease to wonder that the **FEAR OF HELL** hath made some *mad* and others *melancholy*! Abandon then the mortal poison of endless hell-torments, and embrace that glorious gospel which produces in the believing heart, joy unspeakable and fulness of glory.

Think not, my dear Sir, that I hold up this *mirror* to judge and condemn you. My soul gushes forth in benevolence and pity. Nothing but constant *habit* can render your doctrine tolerable, even to yourself. Endless misery becomes palatable to the moral taste of some, as the most *noxious* weed does, when *habit* has overcome *natural* taste. The longing of any mind for that doctrine, a wretched *narcotic* at the best, is wholly artificial. The natural benevolence of the human heart *sickens* at the thought of an endless hell. Christian benevolence soars infinitely above that heathenish theory.

Let me beseech you earnestly, Sir, to make no further reports concerning unknown worlds, except in the language of Scripture, lest you be suspected of pretending to be wise above what is written ; especially by,

Yours respectfully,

R. STREETER.

Shirley Village, 24th October, 1832.

## LETTER VIII.

*To Rev. Hope Brown,*

CALVINIST MINISTER OF SHIRLEY, MASS.

People destroyed—How?—Bible doctrine of destruction—Wesley's views of Calvinism—Infants depraved—Self contradictions; Four days' meetings.

DEAR SIR:

The object of this communication is two-fold, viz. to offer a few remarks upon your sermon of the 5th instant, and give you a brief, unvarnished statement of my views of *protracted* meetings. As you are intimately acquainted with me, I need not tell you I shall use great plainness of speech. You know it is my nature and practice to be open and frank in all my transactions. I do precisely, in this respect, as I would be done by. Of course, you will take no offence if you are conscious of acting upon the same generous principle.

Your Sermon, from Hosea xiii. 9, first claims a passing notice. And before we go farther, let me ask you candidly, whether this text says any thing about Israel's being destroyed in a future state? ‘No,’ must be the answer; because they were already destroyed in *this* world. ‘Thou hast destroyed thyself.’ Very well. Does this

text intimate that Israel would be destroyed, at any time, so as to be excluded from help? 'No,' is the reply again; because the text positively asserts, 'in ME IS THINE HELP.' My next question, is, what attention did you pay to these facts, when you employed this very passage, as a foundation for the doctrine of endless damnation? 'None at all,' must be the answer of every candid discerning person who heard you. The sermon was, seriously speaking, one of the most wordy, incoherent productions that I ever heard from a man of any considerable experience in sermonizing. You would not be willing, it is presumed, to commit it to the press. I will give you a fair price for the manuscript. If you think it will endure the test of fair investigation, you will accept my offer.

I was surprised, Mr. Brown, that you paid no regard to the sense in which the word *destroy*, is used by the prophet from whom you selected your text. Your main object was, to make out by positive assertions, that sinners would destroy themselves eternally in a future state; and yet not be *destroyed*, but carefully preserved for the endless burnings of unconsuming fire! It is a pity you did not just glance upon the 4th verse of chapter vi. by the same prophet; from which it appears that the *people* and the *priest* were in the same predicament. '*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject *thee*, and *thou shalt be no priest to me*; seeing thou hast for-

gotten the law of thy God,' &c. That would have been appropriate.

Instead of discussing your text, you seemed to feast yourself on the iniquities of 'the old world,' 'Sodom,' 'Jerusalem,' and the present generation. It brought to my recollection the words of the Lord, by Hosea, ch. iv. 8, 9. '*They eat up the sins* of my people, and they *set their heart on their iniquity*. And there shall be, like people, like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their doings.' While you were so animated in speaking against sinners, I could not avoid glancing a little upon the 'ways' and means adopted to *cover up the iniquities* of some, who call themselves God's people, and *your* 'doings' in regard to the ridiculous falsehoods and slanders which those people have put in circulation. Soberly and kindly, I thought your manuscript sermon would have rested much better on the 'Dirk and Blunderbuss' paper which you patronize, than on the face of that Holy Volume, in whose truth reflecting mirror, you must have seen yourself, but for your notes in a startling attitude?\* For a man, who confesses himself to be a *sinner* in every prayer which he offers to God, and whose word is not

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\* When the above was written, Mr. Brown was supposed to have been the author of an infamous article to which the following extract of a letter from 'Boxboro', of March 4, 1833, alludes. viz:—

"MR. RUSSELL STREETER,

Sir,—Yours of Feb. 22d came safe to hand. Dr. Beecher once made this shrewd remark, that 'a person who strikes feels very

disputed by those who know him best, ‘to deal damnation round the land,’ on all of a similar character, is too presumptuous to be tolerated with impunity, I had like to have said, ‘*out of thine own mouth thou art condemned.*’ But I wish to be charitable.

Why did you not, Sir, in wandering through

different from the person who is struck.’ This seems to be the case in some measure between myself and you. I struck. You are exasperated. Nor, on second thought, do I blame you. You cannot despise me more sincerely or honestly than I do, the person who retails, in *private*, or ‘in public print, the frothy, dirty rumors of apocryphal scandal and slander.’ I frankly acknowledge myself the author of the offensive article which appeared in the Christian [?] Soldier of the 18th of July. And I am frankly acknowledge it to be one of the *meanest* acts of my life. Yes, even if every word of ‘the *story* of stories’ were *verbatim et literatim* true, I still should view the publication of the ‘*story of stories*’ as a *mean* act. I say this from serious conviction, and *not* from shame occasioned by thinking of ‘Rev. Mr. Fisher of Harvard, or of the *nest of jugs* and *bottles* which young Page found in my barn,’ &c.

I now frankly call the act *mean*, not because I designed to make public any thing but what I *believed* to be *strictly* true, nor from fear or from shame. No, but from a full conviction of both the *utter uselessness* and *mischief* of such publications.—Though the article may have done *you* some injury, it has done *me* good. It will forever prevent me from doing the like again. And more, it has led me to this fixed, inflexible determination not even to listen to the ‘frothy, dirty rumors’ of the day, or if I listen and hear that which I deem worthy of remembering and repeating afterward, it shall *first* be repeated to the person implicated. This, Sir, is my unalterable purpose. And will you not for awhile suffer a little evil for the sake of doing your neighbor a greater good? And this is not all. In the course of two or three weeks you shall either receive a ‘satisfactory explanation,’ or I will ‘take the consequences which rigorous justice will demand at’ my ‘hands.’ Can you ask for more &c. &c.

Yours,

J. R. CUSHING.”

*Mr. Brown, therefore, is entirely exonerated from a participation in the ‘mean act’ above confessed.*

fields of destruction, happen to fall on the 4th verse from your text? It reads,—‘ I will ransom them from the power of the grave : I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, (*or hell*) I will be thy *destruction* : repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.’ This is the manner in which God will *help* the dead as well as the living, without regard to human works. So thought St. Paul. ‘ Who hath saved us, and called us, with a holy calling ; *not according to our works*, but according to his *own purpose and grace*, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began ; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.’ 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. Not a word of all this, did we hear from your lips, but the reverse. You were so bent upon the final ruin of a part of mankind, that, it did not occur to you, that ‘ Christ came to *destroy* the works of the devil’—‘ to *destroy* death and him that hath the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage’—‘ to swallow up death in victory’—‘ to make all things new,’ that there may be no more death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, nor pain.’ But you saw in your notes exactly the reverse ; the devil and his works existing to all eternity,—*never to be destroyed* ; and sorrow and sighing increasing yet *more* and *MORE* forever. You saw Christ defeated in three fourths of his

undertakings, not able to gain a victory over death and the devil ; but after exhausting his own means, and employing a whimpering priesthood to tell people how *anxious* He is to save those, whom God never intended should be saved, you saw him joining issue with the devil and the clergy, in dooming them to the very hell, to which his great co-worker in destruction, always meant they should go !! Yes, you worked round and round, like a blind man in a boat, rowing on the wrong side to get out of the suction of a whirlpool, till you came to the focus (the judgment) when lo ! your God, the Saviour, the devil, the angels and the priests united heart and hand, in hurling all ‘fellow-sinners’ down to endless despair ? And, Sir, if I am never saved till I worship and love such a supreme being as you described, I must join hands with father WESLEY and go to hell, too ! He says, ‘Calvinists represent the God of heaven, as worse than the Devil ; more *false*, more *unjust*, more *cruel*. More *false*, because the Devil, liar as he is, has never said he *willed* the *salvation* of *all men*, and God has ; more *unjust*, because the Devil *could not*, if *he would*, be guilty of such injustice as Calvinists ascribe to Deity ; and more *cruel*, because that restless spirit might be tempted to seduce and injure others from a mistaken motive of diminishing his own suffering ; whereas God is unalterably happy of himself, and yet he damns his uncreated offspring to the flames of hell forever !! If this *be the true God*, we, must say, ‘Mourn, O ye

heavens, and rejoice, O HELL! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' And to this sacred protestation of the pious Wesley, I will unite the saying of the eloquent Channing ;—'I *could* not love such a being, if I *would*; and I *would* not if I *could*.' I am willing these words should be inscribed on my tombstone and breastplate, and go with me to the shadow of death and to the light of eternity ! Amen and Amen.

Your sermon was not only inconsistent in itself, but opposed in many respects to those which preceded it. For example, Mr. Rogers taught the doctrine of total *natural* depravity; that 'the temptations of life do not deprave the heart, but simply bring the natural depravity out; *bring it out!*' All human beings then, are totally depraved, and *destroyed* in a moral respect, before they are born. Their very *nature* is a mass of moral corruption and ruin. So you taught us, by selecting a hymn to precede the discourse, which says, speaking of our *first parents*,

'They lost their garden and their God,  
And *ruin'd all their unborn race*.'

Consequently *infants* are born into the world morally ruined,—destroyed. It is impossible to evade this conclusion, unless you give up the premises. And yet, the notes of that charming hymn had scarcely died away, before you had the politeness to contradict the whole, and Mr. Rogers likewise, by declaring that 'people *destroyed* themselves by *sinning*; yea, ruined themselves by *actual transgression*!' That little chil-

dren were not destroyed and ruined, because they do not commit sin !? that is, because they do not bring their depravity *out*. Had you forgotten, Sir, that the pair of Eden ‘ruined all their unborn race,’ besides losing ‘their garden and their God?’ It must be imprudent to teach that children are safe, with a nature wholly corrupt, on account of not having their moral depravity brought *out* and exposed. May others also, look for protection, if they do not *expose* their nature by overt acts of iniquity? But I will not waste time; for no man of talents and reading can be so confoundedly stupid, as to believe that a being whose *nature* is a mass of moral pollution, can be less the subject of destruction, for keeping that depravity penned up in the heart! All *Calvinists* teach, that the conduct of the sinner is only the *index* of his heart, by which his true character is exhibited, or brought *out*! The nature and character, as they maintain, are the same before transgression as afterward. Hence you are *ditched*, Sir, your own friends being your judges.

You contradicted that position which Mr. Rogers said no one could dispute; viz. ‘that, the *soul* could *not die* any more than God himself,—and declared that every soul died for *its own* sins. ‘The soul that sinneth, *it shall die*.’ As the soul of the father, so of the son also; and that the children did not die for the iniquities of the parents. And, moreover, that all who denied this *doctrine*, agreed with the old serpent, ‘Ye shall

not surely die.' I was truly surprised that you should not only represent your reverend friend from Townsend, as having used the substance of satan's old notes, by saying that souls could not surely die, but as though ambitious of such honor, contradict yourself once more, and preach the same doctrine too. You said that penitent sinners would *escape* the threatened death, and hence, would *not die*, sure enough! Do you not see that you were preaching the old sermon over again, 'Ye shall *not surely die*,' if you will repent? If the penalty of the law was endless misery, then no soul dies which is fitted for heaven. So you preach that an unborn race was ruined by their first parents,—that they are not ruined till they destroy themselves by actual sin,—that the soul that sinneth *shall die*; and yet that a great proportion of them shall *not surely die*, because they repent! Why, Mr. Brown, your sermon contained more contradictions than there are right angles on a chess-board!

Mr. Chickering had represented sinners, in a state of nature, by a man in a boat, floating down a broad river near a tremendous cataract; who being warned of his danger, should spring upon his oars without a prospect of saving himself. While working hard with fear and trembling, a friend on the shore throws a rope alongside the boat, and assures him that if he will cease trying to *save himself*, drop his oars and seize the rope, he shall be saved without works! But you, Sir, called on sinners to be up and doing,—to work

out their own *eternal* salvation with fear and trembling—without losing a moment's time in the great work of the soul. You would have the man in the boat, *work out* to the shore, instead of being *worked* out by the friend and his rope! Yes, in your judgment-address, just before 'the judgment hymn,' you called on sinners in a squeaking voice, much like the shrieks of a child just gone with the croup,—and said, '*My fellow sinners, we have not come here because we think we can save you; but we have come to point out the way of duty that you may save yourselves.*' These are your very words, which no once could mistake, unless frightened out of his senses, by the agonizing manner in which they were spoken. You paid no attention to the boat similitude, nor to that of a 'man clinging to the cliff of a rock, over a precipice of a thousand fathoms, who was told he must let go, and not try to save himself, but fall into the outspread arms of a friend at the bottom, or he would be dashed to pieces by bringing the cliff down with him!' No, you persisted in saying, 'we have not come to save you, but to point out the way of duty, that *you may save yourselves!*' If sinners save themselves by doing their duty, is not their salvation by works? And may I not propose the more fearful question,—If no sinners are saved from endless-hell torments, excepting those who perform their whole duty, who then can be saved? None. Though there are worthy people *in your church and society*, yet, *you do not be-*

lieve there is *one*, either male or female, who lives up to the requirement, ‘ All things whatsoevel ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.’ It was a miracle in ‘ the Son of man’ to live and act according to this requisition; and never had he a follower on earth, who did not occasionally wander from this sunbright path. Hence, as Mr. Chickering said, ‘ Every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world, on the score of works, become guilty before God.’

Lastly. I feel it my duty to lay before you my undisguised opinion of four-days meetings. I form my opinion from reports, facts, and personal observation.

One year ago last August, I heard you deliver a Lecture at neighbor Worcester’s on the eve of returning from a protracted meeting at Leominster. You had been on a similar pilgrimage to Bolton, the week preceding. Well, Sir, what *report* did *you* make of yourself and others? Why, as the angel of truth will bear me testimony, it was this :

In your first prayer, with your holiest people around you, in whose behalf you spake ‘ in the first person plural,’ you said : ‘ O Lord, *we* are *sinners* in thy holy sight; *we* confess *ourselves* sinners indeed; for *we* disobey thy commands and tread thy holy law under our feet. We *are sinners*, O God; poor *blind* and *miserable sinners*, and justly deserve thy displeasure,’ &c. Now, Sir, do not suppose I was so uncharitable

as to dispute the *truth* of what you said. There were persons enough present to *testify* that you were *all* sinners ; and I was fully convinced that you were ‘ blind and miserable.’ But the question which arose in my mind was, what influence have the *four-days meetings* had upon *these people*? Because, as all must perceive, if you were *not* what you pretended, ‘ poor, blind and miserable,’ you blasphemed by uttering such language in such a manner. So I took what you said for granted, as a *solemn* truth. Well, pretty soon along came the sermon from Ezekiel xviii. 13, in part. ‘ Make you a new heart.’ Before reading the text, however, you made a few remarks concerning the meetings at Leominster and Bolton, and expressed a wish that they might be judged by their *fruits*, &c. An unfortunate criterion, I thought, since those who went from home *as* saints, returned as miserable sinners ! However, I made the best of it, and concluded we should have the brighter side of the picture, when the sermon came on. But, merciful sake, the truth came forth in still deeper shades ! You began—‘ My dear *brethren* and *friends*, we have assembled here this evening, as *miserable sinners*! as a company of poor *guilty* sinners, *seeking* the salvation of our immortal souls. Hence, you would bear cross-examination : for the last declaration agreed with the first, with the addition of the word *guilty* ; and *all* sinners are more or less guilty !

*These* were ‘ the first fruits’ then, of protract-

ted meetings, even their friends being judges. For, be it observed, that, so far, I have related your own report, and civilly given you the credit of telling the *truth*. And certainly, it would be impolite and uncharitable to dispute a man's word, where his own conscience appears to have dictated his confession.

May I now give my own testimony?—I am fully satisfied that *some* of your church and congregation have been ‘waxing worse and worse’ for a year past. I say *some* of them. Instead of seeking the salvation of their own souls, they have been busily engaged in hunting up slanders, in order to destroy their peaceable and innocent neighbors. They remain ‘poor, blind, guilty, miserable sinners!’ as you said they were a year since. Your friends and church-members have been biting and devouring each other. And I soberly believe that *one* object of the late meeting was, to reconcile and unite contending parties, smother and cover up the burning feuds of the church, and raise such a dense cloud of smoke and steam, that the public attention might be diverted from the *fire* which raged at the bottom of the kiln. If I am mistaken, please correct me. God knows I do not mean to be censorious, nor to speak disrespectfully of the *peaceable* and *worthy* people of your order. And if you can reform those to whom I allude, by any means whatever, I beg you to do it. I will be the first to give the conversion publicity. No such *fruits* have as yet been gathered. When you will operate upon

the hopes or *fears* of a dishonest, shuffling *nigard*, so as to bring *him* forth, a fair-dealing, open-hearted man, I will give you the praise of having produced one good *conversion*; and pay you a salary yearly, as long as we both reside in this town, of twenty-five dollars! But when you excite the *fears* of an upright man, and convert his cheerfulness into churlishness, the result will not be sufficiently *novel* to deserve particular notice. And, to touch delicate subjects with a cautious pen, if you will purify the *tattling lips* of a prudish gipsy, and fill her breath with the fragrance of *truth*, instead of the poison of slander, I will hail you as a good minister of Jesus Christ. If, on the contrary, your *everlasting meetings* for preaching, praying, and inquiries should draw a few virtuous and amiable young females from the loveliness of youthful pursuits into the deformities of *sub-calvinism*, and change their innocent gaiety into habits of morose gravity and *sectarian* mischief, I shall still contend with Dr. Griffin, that such conversions are the fruits of ‘mere tricks’ and ‘low barbarous slang.’ And since *you* have expressed a very pious wish that *I* might be *converted*, may I be allowed to reciprocate that benevolent desire; and gently to add, ‘When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren;’ not by continuing to listen to tales of falsehood, and assisting in giving them circulation, but by setting an example of equity, mercy and humility. Think of this, while looking over the contemptible pages of the *Oracle of Defamation*, which

you *anxiously* take from the office, as preparatory to Sabbath exercises.

I am entirely satisfied from *four days'* close attendance, that protracted meetings are designed to mislead and deceive the public. The distinguishing doctrines of Calvin were cautiously avoided, and rank Arminianism poured forth in torrents. You frittered the system of Calvin, Watts, Doddridge, Campbell, Hopkins, Edwards, Worcester, Brainerd, Emmons, Griffin, Beecher, Tyler, Woods, Stuart, Porter, and a host of others renowned for talents, concerning *the sovereign purpose of God in the salvation of sinners*, into a thin linsey-woolsey of Divine *wishes* and *desires*, without regard to the word of God or the common sense of men. Your meeting was a bungling imitation of Methodist *camp-meetings* and the like; against which the whole phalanx of Calvinian priests set their faces, like flint, for thirty years or more. Ascertaining that their system would not endure the test of cool investigation, and that the tide of proselytism was in favor of other sects, a host of them rushed forth like maniacs from tombs, and bursting the bands of their creed, cried out Jehu-like, Come, see our zeal for the Lord of hosts! And the most agreeable part of the enthusiastic farce is, that those shepherds who were inclined to slumber away their time in dreamy indolence, fattening on the spoils and fleeces of their flocks, are compelled to *labor hard*, earning their bread by a servitude worse than the sweat of the brow.

But a very respectable proportion of your order are opposed to 'the new system of operations.' Even the Rev. Mr. HUBBARD, of Lunenburgh, holds your meetings in high disapprobation.

Such horrid descriptions are given of God and his law, that credulous, timid souls are more alarmed in being told that God's spirit is present, than they would be to encounter a host of Salem witches and a legion of evil demons! It was obviously so at the late meeting. The announcement of the *Divine presence*, excited crushing awe and thrilling fear. The fearful souls who went to the *anxious meeting*, were first threatened before the whole congregation, with the wrath of God in hell forever, if they did not go without delay! They were told by Mr. Chickering that 'that moment was probably the *turning point* of their souls' salvation.' I saw them enter the chamber of salvation or damnation, as the case might be, with the apparent reluctance that they would approach a tomb, notorious for chattering ghosts and grizzly apparitions! Young maidens and weeping children, pale with fear, sat and stood about the room, mute as the inmates of the sepulchre. Not a word escaped their trembling lips! All was whist as the mansion of death, except now and then a cautious movement or a suppressed sigh, as though the sexton had made some premature interments: when 'the angel of the church' at Bolton, told them that they were in the presence of the great God, whose love or anger they must share forever!

He said that it was an awful place ! and his young friends were placed in a new and perilous situation ! the eye of an offended and angry God, looking right into every sinful heart ! That their immortal welfare or wo depended on the *choice* they were making that very moment. If they submitted, well ; but if they refused, they might never have another chance to secure the salvation of the soul, but be given over and cast into hell, where the worm *never* dies and the fire shall never be quenched, &c. ; and much more of the same monstrous description. His prayer was from the same web. And what rendered the performance worst of all, was, Mr. Chickering acknowledged that he did not know as *he* was converted ! He hoped he had met with a saving change, but did not dare say he had for certainty ; as the heart was so deceitful and desperately wicked, that he was liable, like others, to indulge a false hope ! And yet this very man, who did not pretend to know whether he had been brought from darkness to light, from death to life, from sin to holiness, or from the service of Satan to the service of God—*this man*, I say, was leading the lambs of the flock—he *knew not* where ! Yes, his inexperienced tongue was accelerating the slaughter of youthful loveliness and the soft smiles of innocence, and presenting in their stead, a spectral group of young faces all bathed in briny tears !—Mr. Fisher was more mild and ration-

al ; still, even *he* was not prepared to fan their fainting souls with consolation : saying,

‘ His own soft hand shall wipe the tears  
From every weeping eye;  
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,  
And death itself shall die.’

Now I ask you seriously, Mr. Brown, whether the meeting at Miss Little’s corresponded in any degree, with your announcement before the congregation ? You said, they would retire for *conversation*, &c. But did you not know that no conversation would be held ? If that was not *duplicity* and *deception*, I wish you would furnish me with a name. The simple truth of the case is obvious. The practice of having *the anxious* rise in public to be prayed for, is getting unpopular. Hence the method is adopted to call them out of meeting, as a sort of pledge that they will be considered as *inquirers*, and to ascertain what the prospect is for making proselytes. You knew there would be no time suitable for ‘ *conversation* ’ on the momentous subject of salvation ; and that those *little children* and *fearful youth*, would be no better prepared to ask questions and receive answers, at that time and place, than they would the moment after an earthquake, which had rocked the everlasting hills on their foundations !

To conclude. I am opposed to *protracted meetings* on account of your setting the commands of Jesus at defiance, by the multiplicity and ‘ *vain repetition* ’ of prayers. The same thing

was said, over and over again. It appeared, though you either meant to drill the people into submission, or wear out the patience of Him, who knows what we need, before we ask him. When the Priests sat the example or gave out the *subject* of prayer, entirely different from what our Lord recommended, and sat the honest deacons to pray over the same story, by the hour, it reminded me of the *Calmucs* of Tartar Tribes, who, as the historian says, have certain windmills, called *praying machines*, into which the owner of the hut throws *his prayers*, as written by *the priest*, that they may be turned round by the wind, and save him the trouble of turning them by his own breath. The *priests*, also, have a cylindrical wooden box, to receive written *prayers*, and having placed it perpendicularly on a stick, they sit down beside it, pull it back and forwards with a string, gravely smoking their pipes, while performing the ceremony; believing that to render prayers efficacious, it is necessary to keep them *in motion*, either by the lips, a windmill, or a cylindrical box. Did not the praying concern go on much in the same way, at the recent meeting? Were the prayers not as really *formal* as the written prayers of the *Calmucs*? And was there, seriously, any more life or *fervor* in most of them, than in the petitions turned round by 'praying machines?' I mean nothing personally disrespectful towards any one. But I must discharge my whole duty, and expose, as my Master did, formal and false praying.

Jesus Christ was the devout friend of PRAYER; and yet, no servant of God ever took so much liberty in exposing hypocritical praying, as he did. He reproved those who expected to be heard for their much speaking, and vain repetitions. I would imitate his example. And tell me, Sir, were you obeying the command of Jesus, when you blew the trumpet, from day to day, and announced that there would be praying in the synagogue, by the hour, for certain specified objects? The subjects were 'cut and dried' for public use, and only needed 'to be put in motion,' by the *lips*, as it would seem. They consisted chiefly, in prayers of *parents*, that their *unrenewed children* might immediately be converted. A *pious* child, praying for ungodly parents. A *dear mother* asking prayers that a very wicked *son*, or *daughter*, who was absent might be struck under conviction. A *pious* daughter praying that her unregenerated mother might experience religion. A *weeping wife* entreating that her *unsanctified husband* might be *brought over*, before the meeting closed, &c. These are specimens of your supplications *extra*. I wish to treat the subject in a becoming manner. But how were these written petitions repeated? Why, Sir, in a manner with which nothing but *ice* could sympathize. When you convince me that one holy desire of a mother for her child, warm from her maternal heart, would not reach the ear of God, before any one else could *begin* a formal clumsy petition, as cold and scattering as

the snow-flakes of November, I will countenance such ceremonies, too. Not till then can I be silent, while dull formality supplants those fire-winged prayers of the soul, which ascend to Heaven with a rapidity that would leave the sun-beam at immeasurable distance behind. I am sorry to have occasion to speak thus plainly. But my blessed Saviour sat me the example, by denouncing similar performances. They are *extra* ceremonies, designed to alarm and excite and produce *extra* effects. And were I to shrink from duty, while my own CHILDREN are exposed to such schemes of priest-craft, I should *deserve* the execration of an enlightened community, the stings of conscience in death, and the *ghost* of injured innocence to flutter and scream, in eternal mockery of my timidity and cowardice, at my tomb-door.

With sentiments of friendship,

R. STREETER.

*Shirley Village, 26th October, 1832.*









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